Photo *Lowe, Brixton Hill.*

Belinda's eyes are big and brown;
Her hair of purest gold
Makes for her head a glorious crown
Delightful to behold.
Soft are her cheeks of rosy hue,
And yet she's not a patch on you!

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LOVE'S MESSENGER.

From the Painting by Annie L. Henniker.

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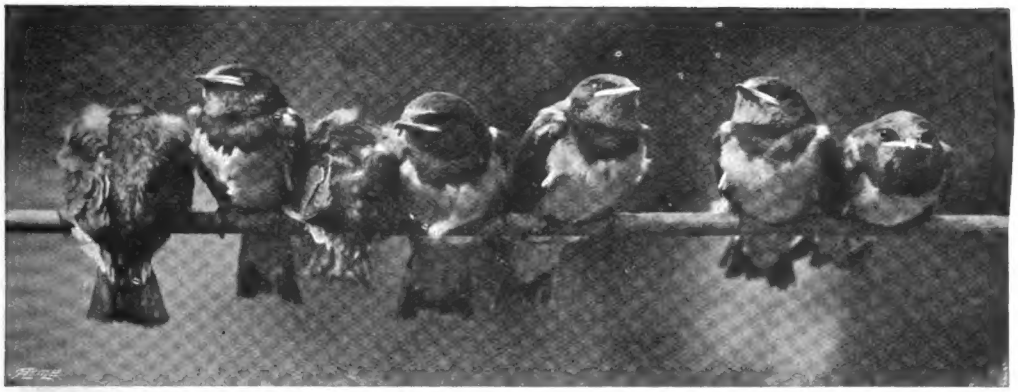

A delightful family of young swallows. To obtain such a photograph as this the nest is watched carefully until the birds are almost ready to fly. They are photographed just before they gain the use of their wings; otherwise they would never consent to remain still. Since they cannot fly, the photographer is able to arrange them as he pleases.

Photographing Young Birds.

A Description of How Pictures of Birds are Obtained, and the Difficulties Encountered by the Photographer.

By Charles Reid.

(*The Most Famous Photographer of Animals in the United Kingdom.*)

Illustrated with Photographs by the Author.

Although bird portraiture is one of the most fascinating branches of photography, it is a pursuit that should be undertaken only by those who possess inexhaustible patience, endless perseverance, and excellent health.

Why the two first are necessary is sufficiently obvious; the third is a valuable asset when lying in ambush, perhaps for a whole day, waiting for some particularly shy bird to return to its nest, when there is just a chance that a good photograph may be obtained.

At the best, the occupation of a bird photographer is an uncertain one. He may often have to wait years before he can find all the conditions favourable for securing the particular photograph he wishes for, and when at last this happy state of affairs has come about, and the prize seems within his reach, something occurs to frustrate his plans, and the chance of a lifetime is lost.

The disappointments he has experienced form little landmarks in the photographer's existence. After a time it becomes impossible for him to walk about the country near his home without meeting at every turn reminders of past failures, although it must be confessed that the scenes of successful struggles against adverse circumstances are encouragingly numerous.

"Ah!" he will say to his assistant, "do you remember the trouble we had to take a nest in that bank over there?"

"Yes," replies that worthy. "And there's the old tree trunk where that beautiful nest of blue tits was. I recollect how carefully we watched them, and then on the very day we were going to take them there was such a storm that we couldn't expose a plate, and the next day they had flown."

That is one of the chief ironies of a bird photographer's life. He watches a nest day by day from the time that the eggs are laid to the day when the young birds are almost ready to fly, at which time they are ready to be photographed.

"To-morrow," he says, "I will take them." But, alas! to-morrow dawns wet, or windy, or foggy, or wet *and* windy *and* foggy. The next day? Too late! The nestlings were timed to a nicety; the next day there is only an empty nest.

Practically speaking, there are in the aggregate only a few weeks in the year during which the nest of some rare bird can be photographed, and only three months—roughly, from May to July—when the photographing of young birds can be undertaken at all. It is impossible to obtain the best results in wet or windy or brilliantly sunny weather, so that the climatic conditions narrow down

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the photographer's time-limit considerably. His ideal opportunity is a quiet, warm day without sunshine.

When a nest has been discovered that it is desirable to photograph, the occupants have to be kept under observation until they arrive at the exact age which is most favourable from a photographic point of view, that is, when they are fully fledged and are almost ready to fly.

A moment's reflection will show why this is the case. It would naturally be impossible to persuade, for example, ten birds that could use their wings to sit still on a branch and be photographed. So the photographer watches his subjects day by day, and his experience tells him when the psychological moment has arrived.

When the favourable day comes, he sallies forth with his camera and his assistants to the scene of operations. If the little birds are to be photographed in the nest, any intervening branches are carefully removed, and the camera is focussed on it from a point somewhat above the nest. The instrument is brought as close as is necessary, but care has to be employed not to do so hurriedly or to place it so near that the fledglings are frightened into taking flight prematurely.

When the birds are to be posed on a bough, however, far more elaborate precautions are necessary.

In an undertaking of this sort several assistants will be found necessary. One man devotes his attention to the camera, and the others coax the reluctant sitters into pleasing attitudes. The camera on such occasions is brought quite near if it is desirable to show the birds alone, or at some distance if the surroundings are to be included.

A group of great tits. They are somewhat difficult to watch and photograph, owing to their habits of nesting inside walls and hollow trees. They are not shy, and show little fear of the photographer.

When the bough has been chosen, the work commences. The little birds are gently lifted from their nest, and arranged along the bough to the best advantage. Supposing there are ten of them, while six are being posed, the remaining four will probably hop away, and by the time they are recaptured the original six are anywhere but in the right place. To soothe the little things, the men who are arranging them sometimes shade them with their caps until the whole ten are quite still, when the caps are gently raised, and the exposure is made.

To any of my readers who would make bird photography their hobby, I would here give a word of warning. In approaching birds or their nests, in posing them, in all dealings with them, extreme gentleness must be the keynote of the photographer's conduct.

A little thought will demonstrate the reason for this. Birds, always shy and liable to take to flight at the approach of mankind, are ten times more shy than usual during the nesting season. Their one thought is to preserve their young from injury, and every animal, including man, that comes anywhere near the nest is looked upon as an enemy. Imagine the feelings of the mother bird as from a neighbouring tree she watches the photographer erect a fearful-looking thing close to her home, and sees him ruthlessly arrange her beloved nestlings in order to make them appear to the greatest advantage!

The little birds themselves must always be handled with supreme care. For one thing, they are extremely frail, and it is quite easy to do them an injury unwittingly; for another, they are naturally terrified at being touched,

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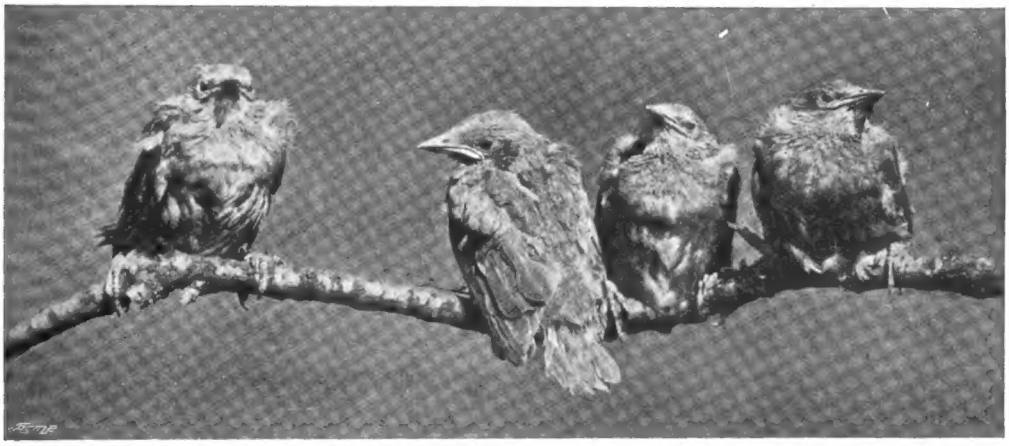


Four young starlings almost ready to fly. Starlings have not all the assurance of tits, and do not face the camera quite so readily.

and the less they are frightened the better. The small bird is taught from its earliest moments to see an enemy, and consequently danger, in everything except other members of the family. Therefore it naturally regards the photographer who seizes it in his powerful grasp as sudden death incarnate, and unless he is the very personification of gentleness the small bird naturally gets a very bad fright.

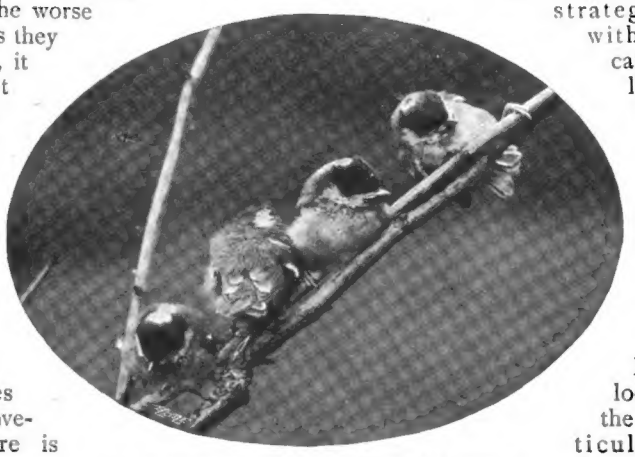
On the other hand, young birds, like all young things, are very adaptable. When one has been lifted with great care from its nest and placed on a bough, it is terrified and tries to get away. But after it has escaped several times and been brought back, and has seen its brothers and sisters do the same with similar results, and when it notices that it and they are all very much alive and none the worse for the adventures they have experienced, it begins to get used to the novelty, and to take things very philosophically.

All photographs of this kind are taken on special rapid or lightning plates, and if one bird makes even the least movement the picture is spoilt. But the expert photographer comes, after years of experience, to feel instinctively when the birds are quite motionless, and thus a plate is seldom wasted.

But, since the slightest sound will frighten a shy bird and cause it to move, an ordinary shutter is practically useless for bird photography. Even the most silent variety makes a distinct "click," and to obviate this the shutter may have to be padded in order to muffle the sound.

Sometimes, in making photographs such as the one described, the parent birds are a cause of great annoyance. They flutter round, calling to their young, and even try to feed them when they are placed in position in front of the camera, so that it is occasionally necessary to drive them off.

To obtain a photograph of a bird on its nest requires the nicest strategy. To begin with, a dummy camera, as nearly like the one to be used as possible, is set up days before in the vicinity of the nest, so as to accustom the mother-bird to its presence. In very wild localities, where the birds are particularly shy, the dummy has to be advanced by easy stages



A pretty group of cole tits. These birds have a way of hissing when a photographer or any other intruder approaches.

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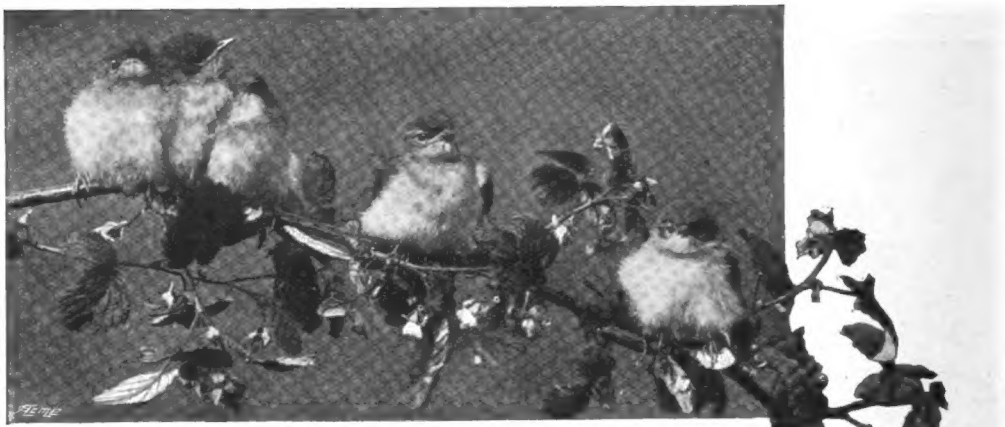


Willow-warblers make delightful subjects for the camera, as may be judged from this charming group. They are very gentle, and get accustomed to visitors very quickly. They have a strange habit of pretending to take no notice of other birds or animals.

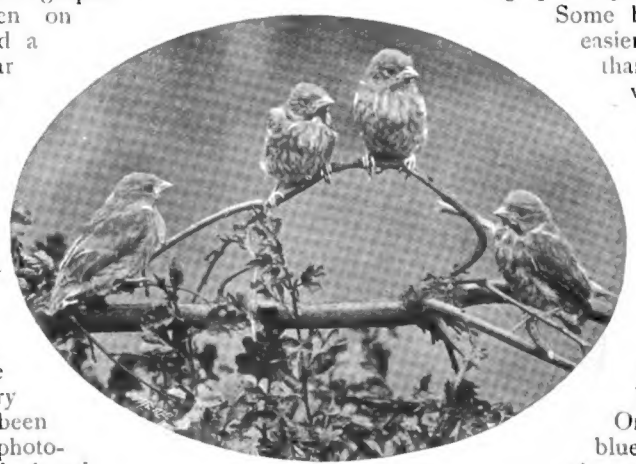
until it is sufficiently close to the nest for the real instrument which is to replace it to be of service.

The muffled shutter is, as usual, employed, and is released by means of a bulb attached to a tube any length up to eighty or a hundred feet. The operator at the far end of this tube hides behind some convenient cover, such as a tree or a hedge, whence a good view of his quarry may be obtained, and reconnoitres with the assistance, if necessary, of a field-glass.

At the most favourable moment he squeezes the bulb. The shutter, being muffled, acts quite silently, and the bird is not disturbed the moment the photograph has been taken.

These bird photographs are mostly taken on whole plates, and a rapid rectilinear lens is used. The various operations sound sufficiently simple, but it is only through much patience and long-continued application that good results are obtained. Very often, as has been said, when the photographer has watched and waited till a brood of young birds is ripe for the camera, the day on which they should have been taken may be so dull, wet, or stormy that no work is possible. By the time the weather is favourable, the birds have flown, and the chance of the expected picture is lost until another season comes round.

Again, there is a great difficulty in finding nests with a background suitable for photographic purposes. Artificial backgrounds are never used, and so the nest must either be situated amid surroundings that throw it well into relief, or it is useless from the photographer's point of view.



Tremendous patience is necessary to obtain so attractive a pose as the one these small greenfinches have assumed. Sometimes an assistant shades the little birds with his cap, so that their attention may not be distracted.

Some birds are much easier to photograph than others. Sedge-warblers, whitethroats, and larks are intensely shy, and leave the nest at an early age, so the greatest precautions are necessary to prevent their being frightened. On the other hand, blue tits and great tits and robins are comparatively easy to approach, and soon begin to take an

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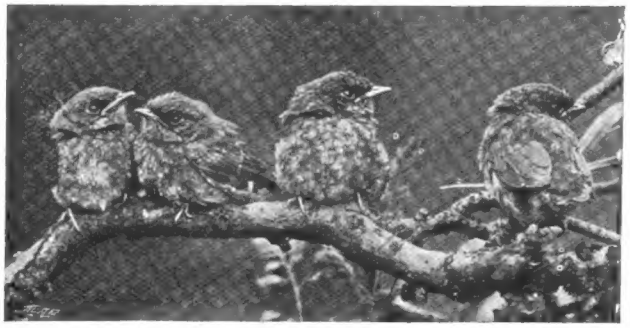
intelligent interest in mankind as represented by the photographer.

The preference of the tits for nesting inside walls and hollow trees, and in similarly inaccessible spots, renders them difficult to approach and observe, but if suitable nesting boxes are provided and fixed to trees in spots frequented by the tits, they will generally be occupied, and the tenants can then be watched and photographed with comparative ease.



These four little birds are robins, but they are not recognisable by the familiar red plumage, as this does not appear till their second year. Robins develop the fighting instinct very early, and small fledglings often try to peck the photographer.

In the case of some birds, character develops very early. An excellent instance of this was furnished by the small denizens of a robin's nest, which were to be photographed in their happy home.

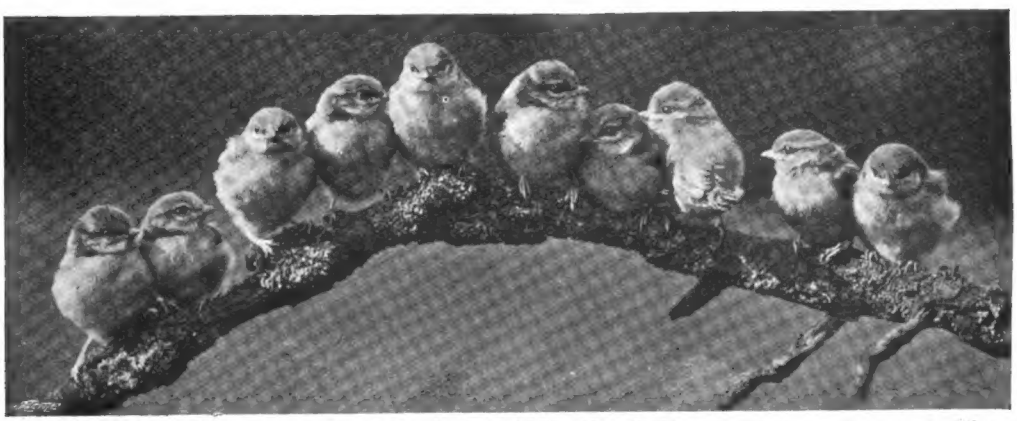
The nest itself was built in a grassy bank situated in a wood, and as it made a charming picture, the camera was trained on it as soon as the young robins were old enough. In order to admit more light, and also to show the nest and its contents to better advantage, one or two obstructions that stood in the way were removed.

Although the small robins were absolutely powerless to fly, they were old enough to have developed some of the redbreast's fighting instinct, for, as most people know, the robin is a most pugnacious little bird. They resented the intrusion of the photographer intensely, and were not slow in making this bad feeling apparent. While the nest was being pressed down a little in front, in order to show all its occupants to greater advantage, one little bird clambered into a small recess at the back of the nest.

It was gently replaced with the rest of the family, but immediately departed again. This game of hide and seek went on until the little bird became tired out with its exertions, and remained quietly among its brothers.

Another little robin made feeble, but none the less indignant, pecks at the intruding hand, and did its best to show an active resistance to the intruder who was violating the peace and quietness of its home.

To the amateur who has the necessary patience, and does not mind lying in wait on a cold day for hours if necessary, bird photography may be recommended as a most fascinating hobby. In any case it is one which eliminates the indifferent and the unfit with extraordinary rapidity, the discomforts of one expedition being generally enough to deter them for ever afterwards.



Ten little blue tits. All tits are easy to get on good terms with, but blue tits, like cole tits, express disapproval of the photographer by hissing at him.

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A SPRING CAROL.

My great ambition is to sing,
With tuneful voice, a song of spring
To you.
The public 'twould be sure to please.
But when I get to where the breeze
Just fans my cheek, I'm sure to sneeze—
Tishoo!

If influenza had not gripped
Me first, I'd sing of daisies tipped
With dew.
Of golden buttercups I'd tell
(Had I not lost both taste and smell),
And lots of other things as well—
Tishoo!

But little beauty you behold
In Nature when your nose with cold
Is blue.
To pluck the first pale primrose may
Be most delightful in its way—
I never have, so merely say—
Tishoo!

To hunt for violets, blue or white,
Would make your shoes and stockings quite
Wet through;
Which would be rash in my belief
(Where is that pocket handkerchief?)
Life at the best is very brief—
Tishoo!

And so, I think, I'll go to bed
And pull the blankets o'er my head—
Adieu!
My pulse is high, my voice is flat
(Is that the doctor's rat-tat-tat?),
My temperature's a hundred—At-
Tishoo!!

Ada Leonora Harris.

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THE ESCAPE OF HOOKER.

The Story of a Burglar's Ruse.

By James Barr.

Automatically he slid the latch-key home, automatically entered and closed the street-door behind him, automatically passed along the hall and stepped into the unlighted dining-room. For Stuart Peppercorn was in the habit of coming home late an uncertain number of times each week, and lights were never left burning for him. By the gas in the dark dining-room he stood fumbling in his pocket for a match.

"No lights!"

These two words, spoken not much above a whisper yet ringing with menace and command, momentarily petrified the owner of the house. He stood rigid, while chills coursed along his backbone.

"What did you say?" asked Peppercorn, for want of some better remark, he having heard all too plainly.

"I said 'no lights.' I prefer the dark. No lights!"

The voice seemed to come from the door which Peppercorn had closed on entering the room. If so, escape was out of the question. Pulling himself together Peppercorn asked:

"A burglar?"

"Of a sort, yes," replied a voice.

Peppercorn laughed a quiet, sarcastic laugh.

"I did not know there were degrees in burglary. I thought there was just plain, unvarnished jemmy-work."

"My case is somewhat out of the ordinary. I've been waiting an hour for you."

"How did you know I was out? Have you been upstairs?"

"No. I found supper laid for you, and your hat and coat not in the hall, so I waited. I did not care to go upstairs for fear of alarming your wife who, I take it, is not over strong at the moment, and might be seriously injured by a fright."

"That's a fact," admitted Peppercorn; then he asked: "How did you learn that?"

"By the dainty, tiny clothing I see she's been making. She has left it neatly spread out on this end of the table for you to admire. In the circumstances I lighted one of your cigars, and waited quietly for you. By the way, you had better set-to on your supper. The consumption of bread and cheese and beer needs no light."

Stuart Peppercorn acted on the suggestion, although hunger had fled at the sound of the visitor's voice. His eyes were becoming accustomed to the dark, and against the door he dimly made out an amorphous shape of a man standing there. The fellow had drawn over him the rich Chinese embroidery which hung, as an embellishment, to cover a rather undecorative door. Peppercorn thought it policy not to gaze too searchingly, so made a pretence of eating.

"Well, what's to be the upshot of this visit?" he asked at last.

"Then you do not recognise my voice, Mr. Peppercorn?"

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Peppercorn started, then, searching his recollection for some moments, admitted—

"No, I fail to recognise your voice. Are we acquainted?"

"I did not dream that a year at Portland would have made such a change."

"What! Hooker! Is it you?"

Peppercorn started to his feet and was about to make towards the man, when again the voice thrilled with command.

"Sit still and make no noise. Yes, I am Hooker."

"Escaped?"

"Rather say 'begun to escape.' I am still in my convict garb. That being so I cannot flatter myself that I have escaped—yet. But if I know you, Mr. Peppercorn, and I think I do, then when I walk out of this house I shall consider myself well off in the race for freedom."

"Yes, and, Great Heavens! I hope you win the race, Hooker, I do from my soul."

"Thank you. I know you mean what you say, and wish me the best of luck. I'll need it. At the New Bailey I saw how distressed you were, and, although the words you put in for me failed to move the judge, I appreciate and still appreciate them. You cannot guess how I repent of having robbed you."

"Then it was really you who robbed me?"

"The tale I pitched in court was a fairy tale. I own up."

"Well, well, Hooker, I'm stunned to hear what you say. Do you know that as time passed I became firmer convinced of your innocence, and for weeks past I have had a private detective working along the lines suggested by your evidence in court and, and—well, we thought things were coming your way. We did indeed."

For some minutes neither man spoke.

"However, the matter's now shoved behind us for ever, Hooker. The slate's wiped of the grievous subject. Your sentence I thought more than stiff, and I had firmly made up my mind to meet you at the prison gate, and to stand by you."

"Had I known what you now tell me, my position might have been bearable. But, Mr. Peppercorn, too late, too late! A convict's life is purgatory, a recaptured convict's life, hell. Too late! Death, perhaps; but Portland, never!"

"Draw up a chair. You must be hungry."

"I could not eat, the strain of my position is too tense. Nor will I sit. I cannot bear you to see your once trusted assistant in convict garb. The shame of it would show through even this darkness."

"Nonsense, nonsense! Sit down. You may require the rest before you reach safety."

"Thank you, no. I shall remain where I am until the end of our interview."

Stuart Peppercorn quietly shoved himself back from the table, and for a couple of minutes turned the matter of this strange meeting over in his mind. Then to his visitor he made known his thoughts.

"Hooker," he said frankly, "Hooker, I want to help you. You have my whole-hearted sympathy and, if we can hit upon the right plan, shall have my practical help. But let me be plain with you. I have myself to think of, and I have others to think of, others born and unborn. Myself I could risk, the others I dare not and shall not risk. Understand that plainly."

"I understand, quite."

"Very well. Now I'll think the position over and I'll think out aloud, and Hooker, I ask you to hold a watching brief for the others I have spoken of. Aiding a convict to escape is a serious, serious matter. You know that as well as I know it. For the sake of myself and others I am determined, whatever happens, not to appear before a judge charged with aiding and abetting your escape. We've got to devise a scheme——"

"Without such a scheme I would not be here. This house is the last place on earth where the police will dream of looking for me——"

"Hooker, dismiss the thought from your mind. I cannot put you up here. I cannot hide you. My wife——"

"To be sure you cannot secrete me here, or, for that matter, anywhere else. When I walk out of this house I walk out for ever. Understand that I do not go back to Portland unless it be to have an inquest held on me."

"Hold on, Hooker! You are not thinking of doing away with yourself?"

"No, unless I am betrayed."

"You do not question my straightforwardness?"

"No, I don't think I do. But, Mr. Peppercorn, I'm different; I'm a desperate man."

"I shall give you no cause to resort to desperate measures. Now, what's your suggestion?"

"My initial difficulty is the getting rid of this convict dress, and acquiring an everyday suit. The majority of fugitives, in effecting this exchange, provide the police with the first strong clue to their whereabouts, and also their line of flight. You have an extra suit of clothes, Mr. Peppercorn?"

"Half-a-dozen."

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Burge, ever cool, sat down. "Mr. Peppercorn, we have entered the last lap."

"Do you happen to have one of unostentatious tweed?"

"I have."

"Very well, I want you to bring me down that suit. While you are fetching it I'll get out of these accursed clothes, bundle them up in a newspaper I've brought for the purpose, and you can hide the bundle upstairs somewhere while I don your tweeds."

"Yes, but the bundle? It is sure to be found."

"You will want it to be found so as to explain the missing tweeds. Your wife is bound to discover the loss of the suit sooner or later, and the finding of my convict dress will explain what otherwise would be unexplainable. But there is no need for the loss to be discovered for a week or ten days. Give me at least a week's start. Mrs. Peppercorn is not likely to notice the absence of the tweeds?"

"Sooner or later, yes."

"I hope it will be later, but whenever it is, in order to make yourself secure against suspicion, communicate at once with the police. Their thick heads will consider it just like my impudence to rob a second time the man they naturally suppose I have a grudge against for 'putting me away.' Indeed, they are sure to think it a ripping good joke on you. Laugh with them. They like that, for they imagine themselves very, very clever."

"Your scheme sounds feasible."

"Even if I wished to do a caddish thing, and I swore up and down to having had this interview with you, not a soul would believe a word I said."

"I recognise that. Yes, I'll get you the suit."

"Just a moment. Have you any loose money about you?"

"Yes, some."

"Gold?"

"About seven or eight pounds."

"Will you let me have it?"

"Certainly, Hooker. Gold cannot be identified. Here it is."

"You're a brick. Place it on the table, and I'll get it when you go for the tweeds. At first it disconcerted me to learn that my voice had changed so much as to be unrecognisable by you, but now I am glad to know that it has, for it makes identification all the more difficult. Remember, I shall not be taken alive."

"I hope you will not be taken either dead or alive."

Stuart Peppercorn tip-toed up stairs, and, returning with the tweeds, passed the suit through the door, receiving in exchange the bundle. The man spoke to him from behind the door.

"Now, Mr. Peppercorn, go to bed, and a convict's thousand thanks go with you. By the way, when does the maid come down in the morning?"

"Half-past seven."

"Then I'll wait till morning, for I do not wish to be abroad during suspicious hours. Put the bundle in a safe place, and if, by

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Peppercorn stared speechless at the rags.

unfortunate chance, I am caught getting out of this house, it will be as a burglar who has robbed you while you slept. Your position, whatever happens, is perfectly secure. Good-night and good-bye."

Next day Peppercorn felt strangely elated, and strangely depressed by turns. He found himself crossing the street to avoid meeting policemen, and when the name of Burge, the private detective whom he employed on the Hooker matter, was announced, it gave him a sore start. Burge, ever cool, sat down.

"Mr. Peppercorn, we have entered the last lap. I shall need to spend a day in Belfast, but, that done, we finish. It will then be time to call in Scotland Yard. We have inserted the key in Hooker's cell-lock, give Scotland Yard the glory of turning it and setting at liberty an innocent man."

Stuart Peppercorn dissembled.

"You believe you have solved the riddle?"

"All but certain, and when I say that another man would say 'certain.'"

Hitherto Peppercorn had seconded the detective's efforts enthusiastically, and he realised that it would look rather queer were he to show a cooling-off now that Burge thought himself on the point of a crowning success. Yet Peppercorn liked throwing money into the gutter as little as anyone else.

"I'm delighted to hear what you say, Burge, but, as it happens at the moment, I want every penny I can lay my hands on. Does Belfast matter for, say, a week?"

"Not in the least—except to Hooker."

"Ah, poor Hooker. But Hooker will forgive me, I know. Can you call here this day week?"

"If you say the word, Mr. Peppercorn, I'll pay my own expenses, and you can reimburse me when convenient."

"Thank you, but no. I desire to see this matter through myself. I do not want to accept temporary help, even."

"Very well, Mr. Peppercorn," said the detective, departing.

That evening Stuart Peppercorn reached home exceptionally early. Somehow he felt he must be near that wardrobe with its missing suit, and its present suit. Before he closed the garden gate his wife had flung open the front door.

"Oh, Stuart, we've had burglars," she exclaimed excitedly.

Peppercorn stood appalled. The cat was out of the bag, and poor Hooker scarcely off their doorstep.

"Burglars!" he gasped, turning deadly pale, and leaning against the gate for support. "Burglars!"

His wife hastened, as she thought, to reassure him.

"Don't be alarmed, Stuart. There's

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nothing missing but your grey suit, and—and they've left you one in its stead."

Mrs. Peppercorn laughed heartily. Her husband thought: "My girl, you little guess, or you would not be so merry over the matter."

"Stuart, don't stand there holding up the gate and looking as though a thunderbolt had struck you. Come this way, and let me show you the suit you've fallen heir to."

There was nothing for it but to do as he was bid. Peppercorn followed his wife through the house and out into the garden.

"When will you try them on?" said his wife, motioning dramatically towards the grass.

Peppercorn stood flabbergasted. There, spread out on the lawn, was the greasiest, raggedest suit of tramp's clothing he had ever clapped eyes on in all his born days.

"I was about to burn them at once, but I thought you would like to see that the burglar had no wish to send you into the world utterly unprovided for."

Peppercorn stared speechless at the rags. Never even a suggestion of a broad arrow appeared on one of them, they were just plain, everyday tramp's rags.

"Shall I send Kate for the police?"

At this Stuart Peppercorn found tongue.

"No, no, no. Hang the police! Let the poor beggar have my suit. If this was his best he was plainly in need of a change. Nothing else missing?"

"Not a thing."

Peppercorn scratched his head for some moments, then joined his wife in a hearty laugh.

"Tell Kate to keep this little matter dark. I don't want to be pestered by friends or police over such a ridiculous thing. By the way, I have to run up to my office this evening. I shan't be late, though."

From his office Peppercorn called up Scotland Yard on the telephone, and was so fortunate as to find the detective who had handled the Hooker case at the New Bailey in.

"It's absurd, I know, but I had a sort of a nightmare last night, and it worries me. Hooker has not escaped by any chance, has he?"

The detective laughed.

"Mr. Peppercorn," he said. "Hooker will escape when he has done his time, not before. Not before, Mr. Peppercorn."

"To be sure you're right, but the confounded nightmare's got on my nerves and I can't shake it off. At my expense can you get authoritative news from Portland, or wherever he happens to be?"

"Of course I can if it will help you to sleep sound."

"It will, for a fact. I'll wait here in my office till you ring me up."

In less than an hour came the words:

"Hooker's as safe as a sardine. Yes, he's at Portland. Now you can sleep."

Then Stuart Peppercorn, replacing the telephone, laughed more heartily than he had done since his trusted assistant Hooker went wrong.

"That nameless tramp deserves every farthing he did me out of," admitted the merchant. "The fellow's a genius, and what a cool customer, too! I see the line along which he worked. Of course, he happened to be in court when poor Hooker was tried and sentenced. He saw how Hooker's fate affected me, for I completely broke down. Then the fellow possessed himself of my address and bided his time. Yes, and he hooked me, played me, and landed me with the skill of a complete angler. No wonder he shrank from close scrutiny, and no wonder I failed to recognise his voice! Never having heard it before I was not likely to recognise it. The hardy impertinence of the fellow amazes me! Well, there's one man who will appreciate this story when he hears it, and that's Hooker. I think I will tell my wife of the midnight interview; in fact, when Hooker gets free I'll tell *everybody*. The joke's too good to keep even though it is at my expense."

Then Stuart Peppercorn snatched up a telegraph form and wired to the private detective:

"Prepare to leave for Belfast first thing tomorrow. Will be at my office at eight."

HEARTLESS.

They say that she is heartless: I agree,
Though in their censuring I take no part—
Of course, I know she's heartless, for you see
I have her heart!

R. Mertun.

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Paul. *Boyer, Paris.*

The department of the Maison Worth, at Paris, where lace, ribbons, and all the little accessories necessary for a charming gown are kept.

WOMAN AND DRESS.

No. III.—THE SECRETS OF SUCCESSFUL DRESSING.

By Jean Worth, of Paris,

The World-Renowned Costumier.

The Keynotes of Occasion and Individuality—How to Collect a Wardrobe Inexpensively—The Attractions of Quiet Elegance—The Foolish Craze for Novelty—The Puritan and Medici Collars and the Tudor Ruff—Hats for the Tall Girl—Evening Dress for the Thin Girl—How the Short, Squat Girl should Dress—The Princesse *Gown—Wedding Dresses—Dress for Cycling—The Absurdity of Sales—Conclusion.*

When dealing in detail with the niceties of the toilette, having regard to the different types of beauty, it may be protested that I am endeavouring to inculcate extravagance. But I am not, as you shall admit very shortly. I am merely trying to reconcile two of Fashion's present demands — the one for individuality and the other for *occasion*. But in fact these two demands are really one. Firstly, let me define "occasion."

In the morning we will admit the suitability of a tailor-made gown, worn with a shirt of excessive neatness. Such a gown the Englishwoman and American wear at breakfast, in that respect differing from their French sister, who takes her chocolate alone in the seclusion of the boudoir, clad in a muslin or cashmere *peignoir*. But supposing there is a wedding, a charity bazaar, or a luncheon party to be attended; a drive *en automobile*, a shoot, or a ride? Each occasion must determine the choice of attire.

Yet there are women who will go in tailor-made clothing to an afternoon reception, or to that smartest of affairs in the eyes of the Frenchwoman—a wedding. Excuses of great number and variety the defaulter will find for herself if questioned. She will say: "This is

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my new frock;" or, "I hadn't anything else fit to go in." Or again, "The day was dull;" or, "The tailor-made is my choice, you know; I never wear anything else." All poor excuses, *madame;* not to be tolerated in any grade of society.

The governess, the employée who is earning the most modest of incomes, can do better with logic as her possession; for her wardrobe will contain *all* her requirements. And its items shall be at once individual and fitting to the occasion. One year she will add to her store a simple evening costume, and a single tailor-made dress in which to walk out with her pupils; the next, she will find opportunity to buy one afternoon gown of ceremony, and perchance a big cloak suitable for the motor-car, the steamer, and railway travelling, and the third year will discover her intent upon the acquisition of a *peignoir*, and perhaps addition to her store of *lingerie*.

Alas! you say, but what about the "fashions?" How can any self-respecting woman clothe herself in a last year's gown? Oh, *mesdames*, that *bête noire* of fashion! Avoid it, turn away from it, and in time you will wonder how it could ever have terrified you.

My contention as to the canonisation of simplicity is my argument of defence. For if each frock, instead of being an epitome of every fugitive craze of the hour, be in detail merely beautiful and becoming, and of good and beautiful material, there will be no reason why, possibly with a little alteration, but probably without any at all, the gown that is two, three, or even four years old, may not be worn and look admirable.

I have said already that vogues and crazes are very fine for the dressmaker. When crinolines were worn years ago quite a simple frock would take thirty yards of stuff, or sixty of thin material. Before me hangs a water-colour of a dead queen in an extravagant gown made to simulate a huge bunch of violets. It was composed of over a hundred yards of silk taffeta, dyed in three shades of purple!

Never order fashions that markedly *date* a dress, is my advice to the thrifty. Thus, when everybody is wearing balloon sleeves, restrain your own. When skirts are so attenuated that walking is a difficulty, say to your dressmaker that you must have extra breadth in yours. And as a consolation for the "deprivation," hug to yourself the truth that moderation is the watchword of the really good dressmaker, and exaggeration his disgust.

One of the first tasks my father, the founder of the house of Worth, set himself to accomplish was the abolition of the crinoline—a fashion that made women not only mountebanks but a public nuisance besides. He quietly dispatched it into the limbo of things discarded; and despite the proverb that the whirligig of time brings back to vogue the modes of seven years before, it has never returned and never will.

On the other hand, quiet elegance is never out of season. One of the most successful robes I ever made was as "simple" as could be. I called it a "stupid" dress, when I told my patron, the well-known American lady, Mrs. V——, how it was to be designed. At the same time I added that I should not let her know the price of it, because price was not to be a consideration. It was, although expensive, to be "simple."

The gown was to be made of black net, thickly sewn all over with black diamonds—"simile" we call them. Not the ordinary jet, you must understand, but a cut stone that scintillates like a diamond. Every stone for this gown was to be picked out from among its fellows by hand, so that the right size, faceting, and effect might be secured. And each stone was to be sewn on the net by hand. The diamonds used were to be in graduated sizes, beginning very tiny at the decolletage, and ending quite large at the hem of the dress.

Mrs. V—— very much liked the specimen I showed her on the doll-model, and said she must have the dress. But she insisted on hearing what it was to cost, and I told her at last that it would be four thousand francs, the "simplicity" notwithstanding. That made no difference, and the dress was sent home—to achieve an appreciation and social triumph that were immense. It looked like a sheet of lustrous flame, for each black stone seemed to radiate a thousand lights.

And yet it was simple, a mere "sheath" of a gown, that fitted the figure as closely as possible, and was absolutely untrimmed! I relate this little story as a proof of the power of fine materials, artistic attention to detail, and perfection of fit, in the making of modes. For that gown in its lustrous loveliness and studious lack of composite ideas gained a victory and owned a charm that mere masses of conflicting materials and trimmings, however beautiful individually, could never have possessed in the aggregate.

Repose in dress is what is desirable, just as repose in manner is a woman's most charming trait. But can this be taught? Not

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very easily; though the woman who realises her need of it will learn it more quickly, even if naturally disposed towards quite the opposite characteristic, than the one who does not understand the bad impression which a noisy demeanour, a strident voice, and attire in keeping with such a part must produce upon the observant.

The black diamond dress I have just been describing may be likened to a picture which is good throughout all time. Supposing the fabric were of everlasting wear, so would the gown be. A dress should not be a garment to be cast aside at its wearer's caprice, merely because the length of the skirt, or the circumference of the sleeves fails to abide by what is called "Fashion's latest decree." In a word, it should never look "out of date."

Glancing over a periodical the other day, I found an illustration of this difference between true and false beauty in dress, in a photograph of the stately young American Duchess of M——, with her first-born son upon her knee. Side by side with the picture were a number of so-called "fashion plates," that depicted the modes of the day, just five years ago!

Oh, those modes! How ridiculous they did look to be sure! One was lost in wonder that sane women could ever have consented to cut so grotesque a figure, in public or private. But the dress of the young duchess might have been made and worn yesterday, since there was no iota of departure from the immutable laws of real beauty to mar it. The skirt was not too tight to be decent; the sleeves did not mould the arms without a wrinkle, nor yet balloon out into immoderate size. Nor were any other *outré* touches of the moment's modes made manifest. Take my word for it, *mesdames*, "Fashion" is not the friend of women, but rather their pitfall and their enemy, to be conquered by studied avoidance.

Is it not true that most men, when they make any comment at all in detail concerning woman's dress, lift up their voices to deplore some attribute of it which they do not like? A colour that is too blatant; a feather that is absurd in its size, or some other detail that is equally grotesque—these force a word of remonstrance from a man's lips. On the other hand, should he be satisfied with the general appearance of a gown, he will make no remark save perhaps: "How pretty you are looking!" Not, be it noticed: "What a nice new frock you have on!"

Many men almost offend their wives by taking no heed of entirely new dresses, and praising, as if they saw it for the first time, some resuscitated toilette in which their wives are looking specially pretty at the moment.

Why, then, do women fly to that which is new and strange in costume? Can it be that they wish to arouse the envy of their fellow-women? Or must they satisfy a craving for novelty, *per se*, that does not speak at all well for their nerve and brain balance, but surely indicates a disposition towards mental breakdown? No sane person really wants the constant turmoil of change that obsesses the woman of to-day, and is the jarring note of the twentieth century in every department of life.

I will tell you a story that will show you how unreasonably insatiable some women are in their desire for sheer novelty. It was told me by one of the most renowned jewellers in Paris, who remodels the crowns of Europe, and has the most exalted personages among his clients. A lady came to him one day, and asked to see the very latest tiara he had. It was shown, and the design pleased the lady, who said it was really very beautiful. But, she asked, was it *new?*

Assured, and reassured upon this point, she decided to buy it. And then suddenly she put a last question to M. C——. How old was it precisely? she asked eagerly. She was told it had been three weeks in the establishment, and great was her chagrin thereat. "What! Three *weeks!*" cried she. "Why, I thought it might have been only three *days!*" As even a fairly simple tiara takes three *months* to make, what matter whether it had been finished three days or three weeks ago? There could certainly be nothing "newer"!

Then another proof that the best designs, the intrinsically beautiful, are not new but old, is forthcoming. The world's great picture-galleries, where the priceless portraits painted by the old masters are hung, are the most inspiring sources to which a designer of modes can repair. Such great painters as Nattier, Madame Lebrun, Romney, Lawrence, and Gainsborough, serve again and again as aids to the costumier in matters of colour, design, and trimming.

A visit to the vast galleries of the Louvre and to Versailles will yield the seeing eyes a thousand ideas, capable of being turned to excellent account; and the same may be said of any picture-gallery where old and beautiful portraits are to be seen.

It is humorous, however, to notice how modern politics and happenings, and especially war, become reflected in woman's

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Photo *Henri Manuel.*

Buying tea-gowns and *negligé* jackets. Some are of precious lace, and cost as much as £800

dress, and actually get grafted upon old historical designs. The Directoire period, this year a very potent factor in dress design, actually has reminiscences of Japan, and the outcome of the Russo-Japanese war established it. Such strange unions can only result in success when deft skill is brought to bear upon the amalgamation. But they are approved as a rule because they are so "new." Oh, Novelty, what freaks are welcomed in thy name!

At the same time, women who dress habitually like old pictures do, it is true, create an individuality for themselves; but they must be great ladies, like a certain great duchess, to adopt the plan with real success. Ordinary women, and especially those who are called upon to go through life without the circumstance of great rank, will do well to avoid any appearance that is conspicuous, even though beautifully so.

In part, however, there are many historical vogues in dress that girls will find very much to their advantage. The Puritan collar will suit the girl with a soft round throat; the Medici, the stately woman in the heyday of life. And the Tudor ruff, affixed to the straight and rather high collar-band, is for the woman whose neck is ageing.

The mistake that is made is an indiscriminate use of fresh modes by those whom they do not become, as well as by those they do. A few years ago there was a rage for the Medici collar that was productive of the most ludicrous errors in good taste and effect. For only the tall and dignified woman, whose neck is swan-like, can support what is really a very trying type of collar.

Having offered these words of advice upon the subject of neck-wear, let me enlarge upon the fact that it is quite easy and very sensible to correct little errors of personal appearance or physique by means of the etceteras of dress. If this be accomplished cleverly, two sisters, one short and chubby, the other tall and slender, may actually be dressed alike, even though the accessories they choose may not match at all.

The tall girl may add a large hat to her attire, which, if worn by her small sister, would bury her beneath it. Far too often the Amazon, so greatly embarrassed by her

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superfluous inches, makes the mistake of abjuring picture millinery in favour of tiny, flat, pill-box toques that seem to cry aloud: "I am so tall already that I must not add one half inch to my stature."

The hat need not, indeed, have eccentric feathers sprouting erratically from it on every side as well as upright, nor should it be aggressive as to colour; that would be absurd. But it should be artistic as to line. The very tall girl may also wear a feather-boa, or one of the big Pierrot ruffles that frame a swan-like throat so prettily. Or should she require a coat, a model of three-quarter length will not cut her in two, as it would her smaller sister.

It is just the same in the case of the girl whose throat is so thin that she cannot wear a low-necked dress in the evening without creating a painful impression. Let such a one, then, fling conventionality to the winds, and order toilettes with a transparent lace chemisette and collar, in which she will look eminently smart, instead of sacrificing herself upon the altar of "Fashion," and looking positively ugly.

Making one type of fashion her own is a very precious resource to the woman of small means, if the style with which she identifies herself be truly the complement of her beauty, instead of a detraction from it. But she must not shrink from altering it when her glass tells her it is no longer becoming to her; remembering that a pretty and youthful damsel will look well in modes which ten years later may be the very opposite of what she should wear, if she desires to look her best.

Some women are marvellously clever with their needles, and others with their pins. There is one royal lady I know who relies upon pins greatly, and she is acknowledged to be one of the most cleverly-gowned women in all Europe. Such women make the deftest alterations in their toilettes, correcting a too short-waisted appearance by a sash made to point downwards in front, or an over long one by the same device applied the reverse way.

It is far easier to make a long waist look short than a short waist long, and as at this moment the latter is Fashion's choice, much perturbation is saved. But the short girl, who wants to look tall, should not draw attention to her lack of inches by putting on an Empire costume belted beneath the arms, unless she is proportioned so exquisitely that even if she be only just over four feet she is yet in miniature a Venus.

It is the girl who is not only short, but squat, who is in a most parlous state. Let her, however, try the effect of flowing skirts, quite untrimmed, and of a striped pattern. Her bodice should be of medium length, with the stripes so cut that they converge towards the waist; those of the skirt also being arranged *en chevron,* so that a series of V's are described all the way down the front. Thus dressed she will immediately congratulate herself on her altered appearance.

The Princess dress, too, will become the short woman vastly, particularly if she be lissom and have a pretty figure. For although that type of frock has been as a rule understood as the prerogative of the tall and stately woman, it is by no means hers alone. The little woman should choose it for her wedding dress, made of thick white satin, and, I need not say, cut and fitted to perfection.

Early this year in one week I made nine bridal robes, each one cut *en Princesse* and untrimmed. Is it to be supposed that each of these girls was of the same height? On the contrary, they were all of different "builds" as well as of varying height. And yet the result in each case was absolutely good.

One was the gown in which a very great American heiress went to the altar. It was as simple as could be, with the long and distinguished lines that appertain to the Princess dress cut quite plain, for it would be a grave error to spoil such by any adornment. The bride wore with her toilette a profusion of blue diamonds about the throat, and that was all the trimming it received. The "simplicity" I preach was here seen in all its austere perfection.

By the way, I maintain that the wedding dress cannot possibly be too simple. It is irreligious to make it look like a ball gown, apart from the fact that it should symbolise innocence. For this reason satin is my acknowledged choice instead of chiffon.

I well remember the first lapse from the dignity of dress as understood by a silken gown so stiff and splendid that it would stand alone, with a collar to match, made by an actress of the Comédie Française, who wore a chiffon chemisette, greatly to the anger of my father, the founder of the Maison Worth. What he feared was that dress would cease to be an art—that it would become degraded and spoilt by such lapses into slovenliness.

Since that time other determining forces have been at work to depose dress from its high estate among women of intelligence and culture. For though it must be admitted that the open-air life to which women of all grades

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Photo *Henri Manuel.*

In the stock room of the Maison Worth, where laces are kept to the value of £600,000.

of society are now devoted has benefited immensely the health and physique of femininity, it is undoubtedly the case that it has *not* exercised a good influence upon dress as an art. In truth, athleticism has subjected women to a severe test of good taste, and that test has found them sadly lacking in that rarest of all feminine instincts. When bicycling was first introduced what did we see? Two extremes of attire, and neither suitable for the sport.

One was the attempt made to ride in flimsy frocks and fly-away millinery, absolutely at war with the requisites of the pastime. The other revealed the banality of knickerbockers, and here in Paris bare knees and short socks were seen in which our women looked like some new biped, and that by no means a beautiful one!

In the course of time, however, sweet Reason mounted her throne again, and with sanity came a sense of suitability. Women donned the dust-brown tweed skirt and coat costume, especially cut to look well awheel. On their feet were neat brown leather shoes, with gloves to match; and on their heads a simple sailor hat or a toque *en suite* with the smartly tailored frock.

I fear, however, that same tailor-made is destroying elegance. Many smart women would come down to dinner in a coat and skirt if they dared; and then at races frills and furbelows are found disagreeable on the grand stand or in crushes.

The use of the automobile, too, has increased the lack of respect, if so it may be termed, with which dress deserves to be regarded by every right-minded woman. For they cannot consider "occasion" if they are to garb themselves in clothes suitable for a long drive across country in an open car, and so they must needs be guilty of the bad taste of arriving at a friend's house to pay a call in wraps and headgear quite unsuitable—indeed, hardly complimentary—for visiting. They imagine that the vehicle excuses the toilette!

Out of that trouble we are, however, passing, just as we did out of the bicycle *impasse*. For now the woman who can afford an automobile drives in a limousine-fitted car, secure from dust and damp. She can, therefore, cast aside the ugly clothes in which it was at first considered necessary to envelop herself for a fast run. How is it, I wonder in passing, that every new form of sport is misinterpreted by women into a command to

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dress unbecomingly? Novelty, no doubt. There can be beauty in everything, *mesdames*, for in one way beauty is suitability. And this brings me back to my contention that common sense should ever rule the aspirant to successful dressing. When she understands the requirements of what each occasion demands, she will have conquered the main difficulty that besets her, and be elegantly clad, whether she be rich or poor.

Unhappily, her desire for mere acquisition is worked upon by absurd "sales" at which she buys bales of useless goods, soiled flowers, and draggled plumage, to be contemplated months afterwards with vague wonder as to what use such trash can be put.

Within the last few years, too, there have arisen establishments where second-hand frocks are sold, and to such places women flock who want to dress showily, heedless of the fact that their mothers and grandmothers would have spurned the mere suggestion of wearing cast-off clothing as unworthy the contemplation of gentlefolk.

Even the so-called "smart" woman is not above selling her once worn dresses, or of wearing at a public place such as a fashionable resort or race-meeting a gown that has been lent her free for the day to advertise a new "creation!" This is all unworthy of a lady and cannot be deplored too sincerely.

Instead of really looking like the women of the *grand monde* whom they think they are imitating, those who ape their clothes in this way are not really reproducing them at all. Put them into the foremost ranks of Society, where queens and princesses and others of exalted rank and superb taste are seen, and the gaily plumaged are astounded not to behold even one of the "latest fashions" which they expected to see. Why is this?

Because those who design gowns for women of such rank shun a mode that is universal, and always adhere to restraint instead of exaggeration. My advice to every English woman and girl is "Abjure the *dernier cri*, the 'latest thing.'" It is not worth your notice. It may well be ugly and vulgar. Instead, robe yourself prettily, daintily, tastefully, in a manner in keeping with your position and the occasion. And wear good clothes. That is enough.

Photo *Henri Manuel.*

How a *mannequin* displays an evening gown before a distinguished client.

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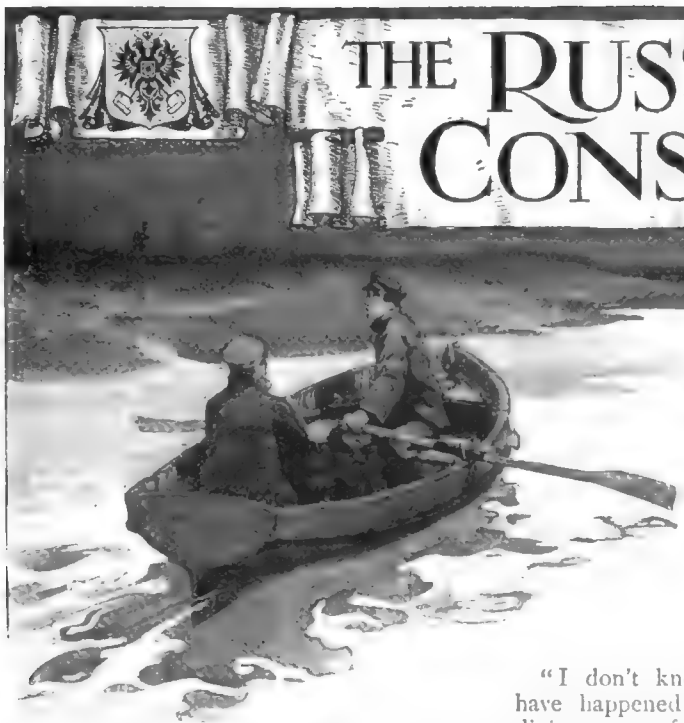
THE RUSSIAN CONSCRIPT



The Exciting Story of His Rescue.

By W. B. Home-Gall.

"I just had to have the *Titania*; there is no other craft afloat that would have answered my purpose so well."

Sir Richard Raleigh, baronet at large, looked half angrily, half-laughingly at the speaker, a good-looking, well-set-up young fellow of about his own age, whom he had caught in the act of stealing his miniature steam yacht from her moorings in the lower reaches of the Thames.

"I see, so—to use plain English—you determined to steal her?" he said.

The culprit flushed and bit his lip.

"I suppose the law would call it stealing, but a letter containing bank-notes to the value of one thousand pounds for four months hire of the yacht would have reached you to-morrow morning," he explained, with an eagerness that showed how keenly he felt the inadequacy of his excuse.

Sir Richard began to see light.

"Are you the Jack Stormont who wrote me last week from Keyham, offering to hire the *Titania* for a cruise in the Baltic?" he asked, adding, as the engineer replied in the affirmative: "You mentioned a brother, a cadet in the mercantile marine, who would accompany you; where is he?"

"Below, firing up for a cruise that will never come off now," was the despondent reply.

"I don't know. More unlikely things have happened at sea. Bring him to the dining-room for'ard," was Sir Richard's cryptic reply, as he led the way to a fairly spacious dining-room beneath the turtle deck in the bows of the little vessel.

"Clear out, you fellows; I have captured a brace of pirates red-handed, and am about to hold a court-martial on them," he said, addressing his bosom friends, Phil Esmond, who, having recently passed through Sandhurst with honours, was awaiting a vacancy in a crack cavalry regiment, and Patrick Shaun, the *Titania's* doctor or deck hand, as occasion demanded.

"Then it's a witness ye'll be wanting, and for a trifle of potheen I'll——" began Pat Shaun, when Stormont, accompanied by his brother, a well-built, breezy-looking youngster of about seventeen, entered, whereupon Phil Esmond promptly bundled the would-be witness out of the saloon.

Signing his uninvited guests to chairs, he seated himself on one corner of the table, and, nursing his knee with both hands, beamed good-humouredly upon them.

"Now, Mr. Stormont, what is it all about? A sailor's spree, or is there something more serious behind it all?" he asked.

Jack Stormont's reply took the form of an apparently irrelevant question

"Hadn't you a special chum at school for whom you would go through fire and water,

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confident that he would do the same for you if occasion arose?" he demanded.

Sir Richard nodded.

"I can hear two men who would fill the bill drumming their heels on the engine-room hatch at the present moment," he declared, with a sidelong movement of his head in the direction of the closed door.

"Glad of it. Then I'll tell you why I wanted the *Titania*," returned Stormont. "It's for the sake of an old school chum who is in deadly peril at Cronstadt, and there's no one in the world to whom he can turn for succour but myself."

"You two fellows surely never contemplated taking the yacht to the Baltic alone!" ejaculated Raleigh, gazing admiringly at the speaker and the sturdy youngster by his side.

"But perhaps you had better tell me all about it," he went on before either could reply. "At present I have a confused idea that you want to capture one of the strongest fortresses in the world with a twenty-five ton yacht and a crew of two."

Jack Stormont laughed somewhat sheepishly.

"Well, not exactly," he admitted. "But we'll never get any forarder unless I pitch the whole yarn, so here goes.

"Ted Raymond and I were chums for life ten minutes after we had fought each other to a standstill in the quadrangle at Barchester. We stuck together through thick and thin until we left school, I for Keyham, he to enter his father's office in St. Petersburg. Mr. Raymond, though British born, was a naturalised Russian subject. Last year I spent my long leave with Ted at his father's summer residence on the Finnish mainland near Liss Ness. It's a low-lying, dismal place, connected with Cronstadt by a succession of mud flats pierced by shallow channels—that's where the *Titania* comes in—but the surrounding country is simply alive with duck, geese, and snipe, so we had a jolly good time.

"Shortly after my return to Keyham, I received a hastily-written letter from Ted, to the effect that Mr. Raymond had been shot by soldiers in the streets of Cronstadt. The letter ended abruptly. Either his heart was too full for more, or he had been interrupted. Three weeks ago I received this," and Stormont handed Sir Richard Raleigh a piece of coarse paper, on which was written in pencil:

Even whil: my dear father's body lay awaiting burial I received notice to serve my three years in the army I refused, was arrested, and am now serving in the X, or Punishment, Battalion of the Novogorod Regiment quartered on Lhina Island near Cronstadt. Come to my assistance before despair and ill-treatment drive me mad.

The communication had neither signature nor heading, and Raleigh looked inquiringly at Stormont, who explained:

"That note reached me in an envelope bearing a penny stamp and the Hull postmark, but without a word of explanation. Probably it was handed to the skipper of some British ship who posted it on his arrival in England."

Two turns up and down the narrow cabin, and Raleigh had made up his mind what to do.

"As steam is up and all aboard, if you and your brother will act as engineers we will be off at once," he declared.

"To Cronstadt?" queried Jack and Bob Stormont in a breath.

"We might as well go there as anywhere else," replied Dick Raleigh carelessly, adding, as the Stormonts were about to thank him: "That's all right; seems to me that I am the one who ought to whoop. I was about to set out on a jog-trot cruise along the coast, and find a rattling adventure ready to hand. So just——"

A loud, angry howl, followed by roars of laughter, interrupted him, and the three hastened on deck to find a store cupboard-door open, Rhymer—Sir Richard's valet on shore, his cook afloat—seated on the deck tenderly caressing his bleeding nose, and glancing apprehensively at a sack supported on a pair of short, sturdy legs, that emitted smothered oaths from one who evidently possessed a voluminous stock of seafaring expletives.

"Good gracious! it's the old sailor! We couldn't keep him quiet any other way," explained Jack Stormont, in a voice hoarse with stifled laughter.

"I aren't over and above quiet now, you piratanical swab," came in smothered tones from within the sack, "and I'll——"

Stormont sprang nimbly aside to escape a butting charge from the sack-enswathed sailor.

"Hold hard, Joe, steady does it, man," cried Sir Richard, catching the attacker as he blundered past him. "Here, somebody, let him loose."

With a skilful slash of his knife, Esmond set the captive free, and, drawing the sack from off his head, the short, thick-set form of Joe Boss, the *Titania*'s "crew," stood revealed.

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Finding the "piratanical swabs" on apparently friendly terms with the "skipper," Joe went grumblingly for'ard, whilst Raleigh introduced the new engineers to their future shipmates.

An hour later, the skipper, Sir Richard, at the wheel, Joe Boss on the look-out in the bows, Jack Stormont in the engine-room, Phil Esmond first mate and deck hand, aft, the others taking their watch below, the *Titania* started on her adventurous journey towards the dominions of the Great White Tsar.

Once clear of the Thames, sails were set, fires banked, and the little yacht bowled northward before a smart south-easterly breeze.

Fair winds carried them across the North Sea and through the Skager Rak into the Baltic, until, one misty morning, Jack Stormont, who was on the bridge with the skipper, pointed to what looked like a dark cloud resting on the horizon, saying:

"Cronstadt!"

A blast on the syren brought all hands on deck, whence they watched the town and harbour of that mighty citadel growing out of the water.

And now a kind of "family coach" was indulged in by the various members of the crew.

The skipper became Sir Richard Raleigh once again, for Phil Esmond paced the bridge in his place; Joe Boss was raised to the dizzy height of mate, and Pat Shaun degraded to the rank of an ordinary deck hand, whilst the Stormonts, exchanging their smart semi-naval uniforms for soiled, blue overalls, remained the engine-room staff.

Barely had the yacht entered Cronstadt, ere the harbour master's launch came alongside, and a blue-coated official stepped on board.

He was a painfully polite individual, and made heroic efforts to conceal his incredulity when Sir Richard Raleigh explained that his reason for visiting Cronstadt was to shoot wildfowl amongst the islands and mud flats, to the north of Rat Island.

However, he refrained from asking the Englishman if he saw any "green in his eye," or its Russian equivalent, and with many expressions of esteem and undying friendship took his leave.

Presently a smart steam launch put off from the Admiralty quay, and an admiral, in full uniform, boarded the *Titania* to pay his respects to the English baronet. He seemed greatly relieved when Raleigh declared that he had no intention of remaining at Cronstadt, his only object being to obtain permission to shoot wildfowl between the fort and the Finnish mainland.

"Then, Sir Raleigh, I am delighted to inform you that you need not delay your sport a single hour. The only authority you require is a permit to carry arms in Russian territory, and that I will give you before I leave the yacht!" declared the admiral.

"Your Excellency is kindness itself," returned Raleigh. "I suppose it is no good asking you to accompany us?"

The admiral shook his head.

"I am not what you English call a man who sports," he replied; and Sir Richard with difficulty concealed his satisfaction. "But, now I think of it, I have a cousin in the artillery who will, I am sure, be delighted to accompany you," he added, and Sir Richard experienced even greater difficulty in hiding his disgust under a forced smile of delight.

An hour after the admiral's departure, his cousin, Captain Manikon, who professed himself delighted at the prospect of a few days' sport "with so charming an acquaintance as Sir Raleigh," arrived, and the yacht, leaving the stern, grey fortifications behind, sailed northwards.

Their destination reached, Sir Richard and Captain Manikon were rowed by Joe Boss to a reed-covered island, whence they returned two hours later with four brace of geese, a pair of ducks, and a couple of snipe.

Immediately after dinner Sir Richard opened the campaign by sending Rhymer with a present of game to the officers commanding Lhina Island.

As he anticipated, the gift brought an invitation to mess with the officers of the X Battalion Novgorod Regiment the following evening.

Punctual to the minute, Sir Richard, accompanied by his valet, entered the barracks on Lhina Island, where he found the officers coarse, ignorant swashbucklers, little better than the peasant soldiers they commanded.

Whilst the master was being entertained by the officers, his man received the freedom of the sergeants' mess.

Poor Rhymer was not an admirer of Russian cookery, and vodka always gave him a headache, yet, with an unexampled heroism, he dashed off the glass of fiery spirit that preceded the very worst dinner he had ever sat down to, and tried, by signs and grimaces, to make himself agreeable to his hosts.

Now, a conversation sustained entirely by

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signs is apt to become tedious, so, ere long, the Russians began to look about them for an interpreter, as the wily conspirators had intended they should, with the result that an orderly was dispatched to the barrack-room, to return, a few minutes later accompanied by a young fellow of eighteen, whose handsome face was disfigured by a number of bruises.

"I understand you speak English. I am glad, for I began to fear these fine fellows and myself would pass but a dull evening," was Rhymer's greeting.

"These fine fellows, as you call them, are fiends incarnate, second only in cruelty and brutal ingenuity, to their superior officers," was the angry reply.

"You are indiscreet. Be calm, your troubles will soon be over," promised Rhymer in casual tones, as though discussing the weather or some kindred subject. "For Heaven's sake keep a firm hold of yourself, sir," he added earnestly. "Tell them I am overwhelmed with their kind reception, and hope, if ever they come to England, to be able to return their hospitality."

The interpreter repeated Rhymer's words to a bushy-bearded sergeant-major.

"Curse the pale-faced son of an English hog. When we visit England I hope it will be half-a-million strong," growled the sergeant-major. "Tell him we are honoured that our poor repast has given him satisfaction," he added, laying his hand on his heart and bowing low.

"I presume you are Mr. Raymond?" said Rhymer, smiling amiably as though replying to his host's message. "Be wary. Friends are at hand to rescue you."

"What does the half-witted one say?" demanded a sergeant suspiciously.

"He is stricken with admiration at yonder picture, and has asked me to explain it, little Father," returned Raymond, pointing to a fearfully and wonderfully executed oleograph of the Battle of Plevna.

"Bah, the Englanders are but savages who dwell in an island on which the sun never shines. Let him look at it. Tell him that the Tsar has a whole room full of pictures like that," ordered the sergeant-major.

"Is Mr. Stormont with you?" asked Raymond, drawing attention to a Russian general whose charger was neatly balanced on the summit of a precipitous mountain.

Rhymer laid his hand on a burning building in the centre of the picture, as he answered in the affirmative.

"Good old Jack. I knew he would not forsake me," cried the conscript gratefully. "And your master? He must be one of the very best."

"Sir Richard Raleigh is a true English gentleman, and I think that is the highest praise a man can receive," declared Rhymer with enthusiasm. "Oh, lor! here's another scoundrel with a glass of vodka. Tell him I'll see him in er—er—Port Arthur before I'll drink it," he added in dismay, but there was no help for it, so he tossed the spirit down as though he loved it.

"You'd better let me deliver my message at once. Another glass of that dreadful stuff will do for me," moaned poor Rhymer, as he returned the empty glass to the sergeant. "Mr. Stormont says that you are to buck up—those were his words. Give time and place, and he'll be there with a boat to take you off."

Raymond laid his index finger on the Turkish commander-in-chief.

"It must be to-night, or not at all," he declared. "To-morrow I am to receive sixty lashes unless I join the Greek Church. That I will never do. Rather than submit I will run amok amongst the officers, and force them to kill me. In the morning, exactly when the hour-long night ends and another day begins, be on the spit of land to the east of the island. If from any unforeseen cause——"

"Now, you conscript dog, what are you talking about? A man does not turn pale and tremble just because he is showing a picture to another," roared the sergeant-major.

"He angered me, little Father, for he said the Turks would have beaten the Russians at Plevna, as his countrymen did in the Crimea, had they not been hopelessly outnumbered," explained Raymond.

"The lying dog! All the world knows our brave troops would have driven the islanders into the sea had not our Father the Tsar had pity on them," growled his superior; then, after exchanging a few whispered sentences with his comrades, he ordered Raymond to barracks, and shortly afterwards Rhymer was summoned to accompany Sir Richard back to the yacht.

About half-an-hour before the time mentioned by Raymond, the dinghy was noiselessly lowered and, manned by Sir Richard Raleigh and Jack Stormont, disappeared in the darkness.

An hour of breathless suspense followed; then, just as the increasing light of day told that the crucial moment had passed, and their comrades were returning to the yacht to

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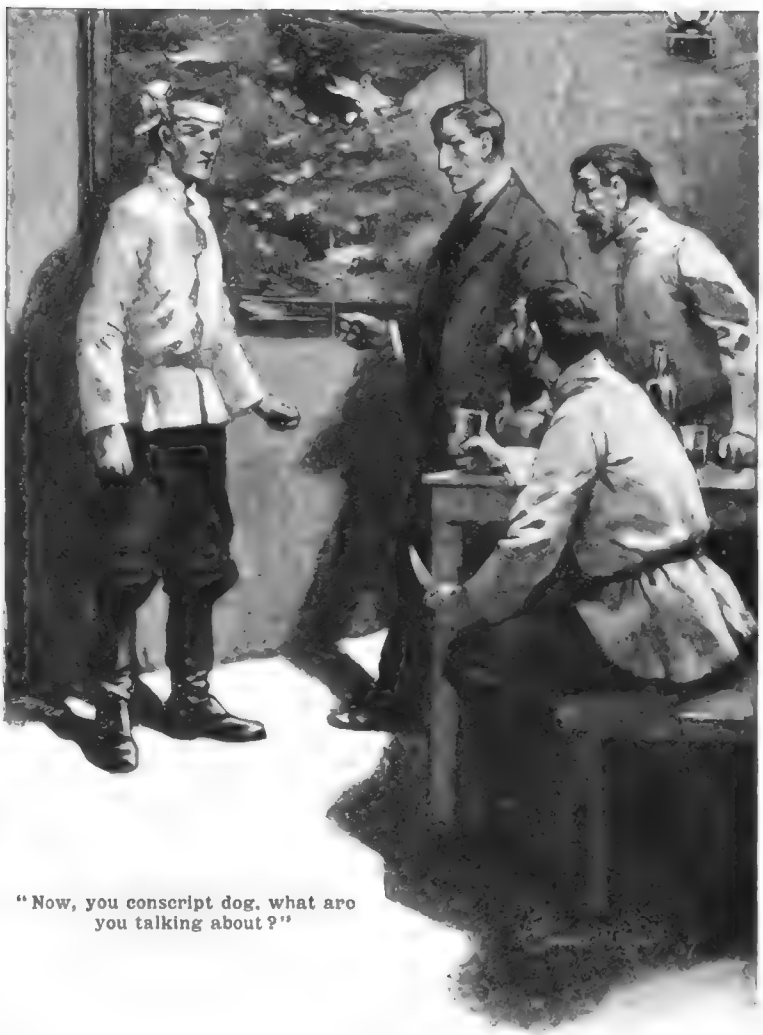
report success or failure, those on board the *Titania* saw the dinghy appear for a moment on the mist-laden water, then disappear beneath the yacht's quarter.

Three minutes later, two dark figures had leapt silently over the bulwarks, the dinghy had been hoisted on to her davits, and the deck cleared of all save Joe Boss, who was on duty.

Suddenly a deep, sullen boom echoed over the waters, answered a few minutes later by a more distant report from Cronstadt, and Joe Boss, turning towards the island, winked solemnly at a flock of frightened geese winging their flight to the marshes of the mainland.

Loud though the first summons, it apparently failed to awaken the tired crew of the *Titania*, but barely had the echoes of the reply died away ere Captain Manikon hastened on deck and looked anxiously around.



"Now, you conscript dog, what are you talking about?"

He seemed surprised to find only Joe Boss on deck.

"Seems as though there's summat wrong on the island, sir," commented the bo'sun, touching his forelock.

"A deserter has most probably escaped, but that would not interest us," asserted the Russian, and returned to his cabin. The idea that the yacht had come all the way from England that a common soldier might desert from the Tsar's army never entered his head.

Again Joe Boss winked, this time at some duck flying around their bows, then securing a telescope from the miniature chart-house he focussed it on the island just in time to see an eight-oared whaleboat, crammed with soldiers, leave the shore.

Bending over a speaking-tube, which communicated with the skipper's cabin, he whispered:

"Whaleboat just put off from Lhina, sir."

"All right; lie low until you're hailed," came back the answer.

Twenty minutes later Joe's lips sought the speaking-tube once more.

"Tallow-eaters alongside, sir," was his laconic message, and Sir Richard reached the deck just as an officer sprang on board, followed by half-a-dozen men, who, in obedience to their superior's orders, stationed themselves at the cabin doors and companion ways, whilst the skipper looked on with an

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"If you think your man is on board the *Titania*, you had better find him," he said.

amused smile that almost drove the Russian officer frantic.

"Well, Captain Remin, now you have posted your men, perhaps you will be good enough to enlighten me as to the object of this early visit?" he asked, recognising one of his hosts of the previous evening.

"You have a deserter on board?" declared the Russian, in the tone of one announcing an undeniable truth.

"Indeed, how interesting!" drawled the skipper. "I suppose you have come for him. Well, I have no objection. Have you breakfasted?"

"No, sir, I have not, and what is more I don't want any breakfast. I want the soldier from my company you have enticed away," fumed the captain.

Sir Richard shrugged his shoulders.

"As you like. If you think your man is on board the *Titania*, you had better find him," he said moving off.

"I do not think you will find the deserter here, Captain Remin. I have been on board all the time, and he could not be hidden on this little cockle-shell without my knowledge," interposed Captain Manikon; then, drawing the officer aside, he added in a whisper: "My dear fellow, be careful how you act; we do not want trouble with England at this juncture. You understand."

"I understand that a deserter from my company is on board this vessel and I mean to have him," retorted the other doggedly, as, followed by a sergeant and a private, he searched the yacht from keel to upper deck, but in vain.

Baffled, but not beaten, he insisted upon taking the yacht to Cronstadt, where, despite Raleigh's remonstrance, she was thoroughly overhauled by both police and military, but no trace of the deserter could be found.

Captain Remin was furious. Every nook and corner of the *Titania* had been searched in vain, yet he was confident that his man was still on board. Even when Pat Shaun, with due solemnity, opened the magazine of his box camera, and Bob Stormont deliberately turned out the linings of his pocket he was not satisfied, but, his moustache

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literally bristling with rage, turned angrily on his heel and retired to the stokehold for, perhaps, the tenth time.

He was standing opposite the fireless furnace when suddenly an ejaculation of triumph escaped his lips. He had hit upon the deserter's hiding-place at last.

"Remove the man-hole plate from the boiler," he ordered, tapping Jack Stormont on the shoulder and grinning villainously as the engineer hesitated, and turned pale.

"Confound it, no. I have had enough of this fooling about," interposed Sir Richard, who had followed the Russian below.

"Perhaps monsieur will allow the fires to be lighted," proposed the captain, rubbing his hands with the air of one who has played a trump card.

"Certainly, the wind is against us and we cannot leave under sail," agreed the baronet, and Stormont, after a second's hesitation, shot a brazier of burning coal through the furnace doors, and soon the fire was blazing fiercely.

The captain's face was a perfect study. Either the deserter was not there or these mad Englishmen were deliberately boiling their friend alive. At any rate he had no longer any excuse for remaining below.

Very reluctantly he left the engine-room and shortly afterwards the ship, all unconscious that during his many visits to the engine-room he had been close to and at times within a few inches of the deserter.

An hour later, mockingly dipping her ensign to the forts on either side of the harbour mouth, the *Titania* steamed out to sea, and Sir Richard hastened below just as Jack Stormont and his brother removed the dome from the evaporator, whence they assisted the man they had saved from the Great White Tsar's grip.

"Ugh, I've heard of being par-boiled, but I never thought to be par-baked," groaned Raymond, as he stretched his cramped limbs and wiped the perpiration from his forehead, for the evaporator touched the engine and was like an oven inside.

"Never mind, old chap, we've diddled the Russians at any rate."

"Here, drink this," interposed Bob Stormont, handing his chum a long soda and whisky, which he drained to the last drop.

"Nectar, unadulterated nectar!" he cried, handing back the empty glass. "Now do your duty, Jack; introduce me to our host, then tell me all about it. I could neither see nor hear anything shut up in that cast-iron tube."

Stormont complied, but to cut short the ex-conscript's thanks the skipper led him to the spare bunk lately occupied by Captain Manikon, where a suit of clothes had been provided to supply the place of the hated Russian uniform.

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THE ABSENT-MINDED BEGGAR.

The beggar held his match-s out
Before each person drawing nigh;
Appealingly he gazed about,
And begged them all to buy.

"Kind friends," he murmured, "spare a
coin!"
And many tender-hearted folk
(Whom I, however, did not join)
Took pity when he spoke.

He spoke, I say . . . You think me mean,
And callous still perhaps? . . . Come,
come!
The very day before, I'd seen
Him labelled "Deaf and Dumb!!"

Leslie Thomas.

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My Lady's Tantrums

Mr. Jasper Weird's lady has a terribly defiant air that would appal the bravest.

Hitherto it has been an Open Question Whether My Lady can be Angry and Pretty at the Same Time. That Anger, in the Opinion of our Leading Humorous Artists, does not Improve Her is Clear from the Illustrations of this Article.

By M. Tindal.

I, who write these words, was present the other day at a domestic scene of the first water. The heroine, an infuriated wife, was outpouring, in a rushing torrent, the vials of her wrath. The villain of the piece, a meek and humble husband, was sitting beneath the cataract of words, trembling visibly. He was a man whose one idea, when his wife was in a tantrum, was to get her out of it as soon as possible. I could see that he was waiting for a chance to say something to conciliate her. It came when she paused for breath; and eagerly he seized it.

"Darling," he said, "go on! Go on! You never look so pretty as when you are angry with me!"

I could not help admiring his ingenuity, though I wondered what inspired the idea. His wife was certainly a pretty woman in the normal way; but at that moment she was looking more like a wild cat than anything else. Her face, as the saying is, was "distorted with passion." And it was like a wild cat that she sprang at the unfortunate husband, and seized his scalp in her talons, directly his conciliating speech was delivered.

That, however, is by the way; the point that interested me most was the husband's idea that his wife was never so pretty as when in a passion. I wondered if all husbands thought that of their wives; and wondered if any woman *could* be pretty when thoroughly roused to wrath.

"Yorick's" enraged goddess gains additional terrors from her lorgnette.

It was in order to settle this point and throw other sidelights on the subject of woman in a temper, that the illustrations which accompany this article were made. They represent woman in a temper as seen by the eyes of a number of leading masters of humorous art. I think they provide a fair evidence on which to argue the question: "Can woman angry be, at

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No one could feel affectionate towards Mr. Harrison's angry lady.

the same time, woman beautiful?"

One can imagine that the lady in the heading is, in her sane moments, a lovely creature. She has a good figure, beautiful neck and shoulders, a Grecian nose, handsome, bold eyes. But I think no one will deny that as her likeness has been caught by the artist, she looks more mad than pretty. Her hair is flying, her combs are dropping, her pins have been shaken by her fury into the air. And one would not describe her mouth, as pictured, as "adorable." We can well imagine, from the expression of the mouth, what sort of words are issuing from it.

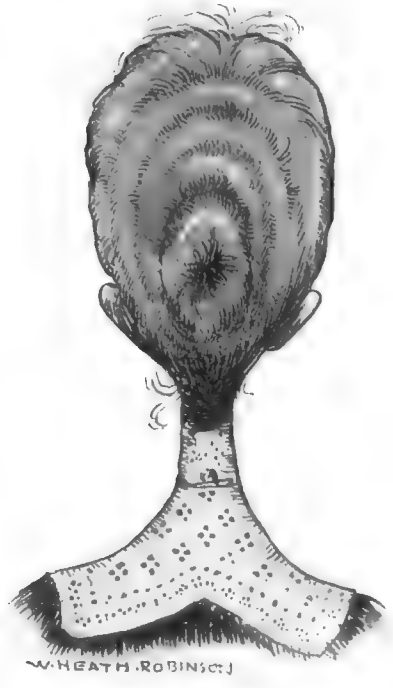
If we look carefully at any other of the illustrations, we shall seek in vain an angry face that is, at the same time, pretty. Whereas we shall find more than one case of a face that might be pretty if it were not angry. In fact, we shall discover quite sufficient evidence to give force to a warning to all pretty women against tantrums.

Mr. Hassall has given us a perfect fury who seems almost to radiate thunder and lightning.

Anger, we may conclude, puts prettiness to flight.

Then another question arises: If my lady continually flies into tantrums, will she not eventually lose her good looks altogether? Will not the face of the lady in the heading take on, in course of time, an habitual expression such as is worn by the lady of Tom Browne's sketch? This lady might be good-looking if she were good-tempered. Her sour temper has made her looks sour.

Temper, we may conclude, will out. Sooner or later, my lady who is for ever flying into tantrums will fly the flag of temper in



Even the back of Mr. W. Heath Robinson's damsel bristles with defiance.

her face. Her good looks, if she has any, will desert her. And not only her face, but her whole figure, will say as clearly as words: "My temper is bad!"

In proof of this, I will call as evidence the sketch of a lady's back and back-hair, done by W. Heath Robinson. So obviously is the other side of that lady's portrait bad-tempered in expression, that no judge would require that the case should be argued. Every hair of the lady's head expresses "Tantrum." A clever actress will show that she is in a vilely bad temper when sitting with her head turned away from the audience. She will express

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temper with her back as clearly as she can with her face.

A limited amount of feminine temper is, in some eyes, a virtue rather than a vice. The theory is that a woman who never has her tantrums is liable to be soft in character. "I like a little bit of devil in a girl," one man will say to another, "it shows high mettle." It is when the "little bit of devil" grows up that the trouble begins.

Of tempers, there are many sorts. By common consent, the worst of all is that sulky temper which may endure for hours. This is a silent sort of temper. The woman in its grip seldom says very much, but what is said is bitter as gall and sharper than needles. The best of all tempers is the explosive sort. It dies away as suddenly as it flares up, and if the husband whose wife has such a temper is not fool enough to feed its fire with fresh fuel in the form of self-defensive remarks, he will suffer no harm from it. Let man beware of arguing with woman in a temper. If women are always unreasonable, always illogical, never are they more so than when in their tantrums.

Mr. Tom Browne's creation has an air of concentrated bitterness that makes the blood run cold.

Nobody understands the vagaries of women's tempers better than the London police magistrate. I remember once reading with deepest interest the workings of the mind of a magistrate, who had before him a woman seeking help in the management of her husband.

She was a typical shrew; and as she stood in the witness-box giving evidence against her husband's character, it needed no acumen to discover that her temper was not her strongest point. At last the woman paused to take breath; and the magistrate held up his hand, as a sign that she should proceed no further.

"Madam," he said, "I quite understand the sort of man your husband is—and I divine the reason. There is nothing I can do."

The lady portrayed by Mr. Lawson Wood evidently hails from Billingsgate, and the light of battle in her eye bodes ill for her victim.

There is a comfortable, matronly appearance about Mr. T. Heath Robinson's lady, and we feel sure she is not seriously put out.

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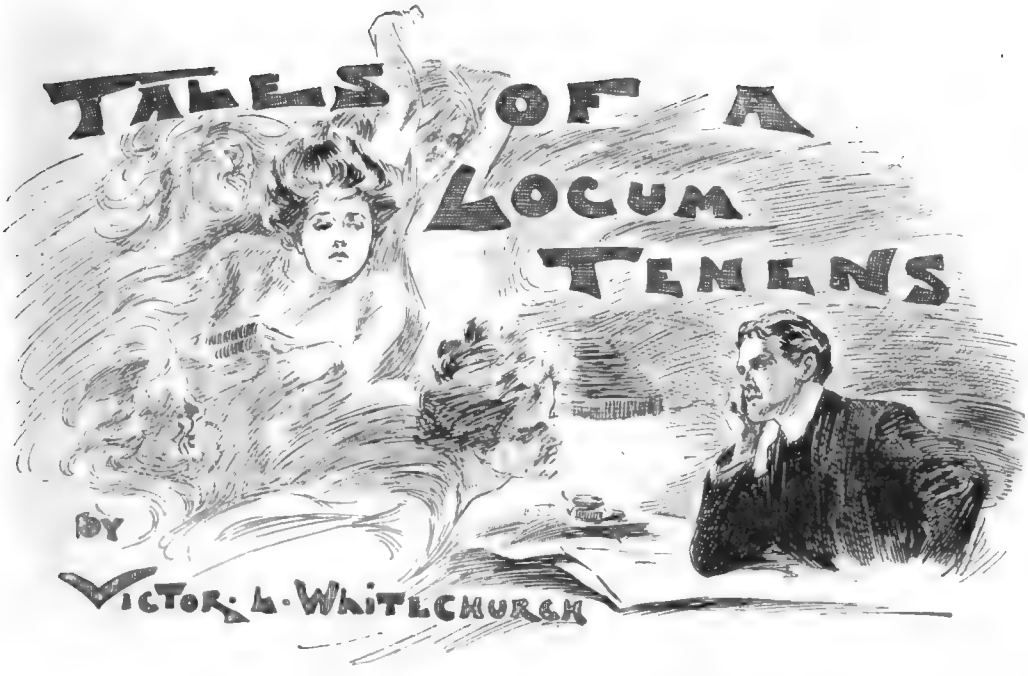

No. II.—THE CASE OF SQUIRE HARDING'S WILL.

How a Fraud on a Dying Man was Prevented.

It was a characteristic of Merrick Holt that he could keep his own counsel, a most useful gift for any man to possess, especially for a clergyman. He was always more inclined to let others talk than to talk himself, and he sometimes summed up an argument with immediate action rather than by rhetoric. In the curious affair of Milton Grange this characteristic of his came out very strongly.

The following extract from Little Milton Parish Magazine will serve to describe Holt's position at the commencement of the chain of events:

> The Vicar will be away during the first three Sundays in October. His duties will be taken by the Reverend Merrick Holt, who will reside at the Vicarage. In cases of sickness or other emergency our readers are requested to place the same trust in him as they would in the Vicar.

Milton certainly deserved its title of "Little." It was a tiny, remote village, about four miles from the small town of Wraysford. There was little else for Holt to do except to take the Sunday services, and he certainly never anticipated the break in the monotony of his duties that suddenly occurred.

Little Milton was a straggling village, for the most part consisting of labourers' cottages, with a sprinkling of scattered farmhouses. About a couple of miles from the Vicarage Holt noticed a large, sombre-looking house, standing well away from the road, and half hidden by the trees which incircled it. He asked the Vicarage housekeeper about it.

"Milton Grange it's called, sir, and a lonesome place it is, too. Ain't you never heard about Squire Harding, sir?"

"I'm afraid not, Mrs. Chase. Is he the owner?"

"Yes, sir. But no one ain't seen him outside his grounds these ten years, and he never has any visitors except master, and he only lets him in when he's in the mood."

"A misanthrope, eh? What's the matter with him?"

"Well, sir, his son, Mr. Tom Harding, married against his wishes, and he never forgave him. It turned him regular sour. He refused to have anything more to do with his son, or anyone else. He's very rich, but he lives like a hermit. He dismissed all his servants but one, and she's quite an old woman now."

"Has he no other relatives?"

"His wife died when their only son was born. She was a widow with two children,

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Richard and Fanny Marsh. They have been here occasionally, but not for some time now. They do say as how the old man's been ailing lately. Master saw him just before he went away, and thought him looking very feeble."

Merrick Holt wondered whether it would not be as well for him to visit this strange recluse, but an evening or two afterwards he was saved the trouble of solving the problem.

Mrs. Chase came into the study with a note:

Milton Grange,
Wednesday Evening.

DEAR SIR,

My stepfather, Mr. Harding, is very seriously ill, and has just expressed a wish to see the Vicar. I understand that he is away, but am sending to ask if you will come at once, for there is no time to be lost. Yours faithfully,

FANNY MARSH.

"Don't sit up for me, Mrs. Chase," said Holt. "I shall take the front door key with me."

Careful and methodical as he always was, he put his little prayer-book in his pocket, brushed his clothes in the hall before putting on his overcoat, and then went out.

It was a very dark night, threatening to rain. The Vicar kept no trap, so his only way was to walk. He was not very much accustomed to the country, and found it rather difficult to find the road at first. At length he walked along it at a good round pace.

Not a soul was about, and already, though it was not much after eight, the lights in some of the upper windows of the cottages told that their inmates—most of whom were up at five—were going to bed. Outside the village the sense of loneliness increased. The only sound was his own footsteps on the high road.

At length, after about two miles' walk, the dim figure of a signpost warned him that he had reached the turning which led to the Grange. It was darker than ever here, hedges running on each side of the narrow road. Presently he reached the entrance gate of the gloomy private carriage drive. It creaked on its rusty hinges as he opened it. Then he found himself groping beneath the trees, every now and then striking a wax vesta to make sure of his path. It had begun to rain, and the trees were dripping with large drops.

It was an eerie experience, this going up to a gloomy house that night to visit the dying. At length a light showed him that he had reached his destination. Even then his natural calm did not desert him for a moment, and he carefully wiped his muddy boots on the mat outside when he had rung the bell.

The door was opened by an old woman carrying a single candle, that but dimly illuminated the great hall into which she ushered him. He looked at her keenly. She was very pale, and trembling a little.

"Are you the clergyman, sir?" she asked, in a thin, quivering voice.

"I am," replied Holt, as he took off his hat and overcoat. "How is Mr. Harding?"

He thought he saw her throw a glance round before she answered.

"I—I haven't seen him since this morning, sir; the doctor was here then and gave him up. I wanted to send for you before—but——"

"Good-evening. It's so very kind of you to come."

He turned. The speaker was a woman of nearly forty, and was in the act of coming down the stairs into the hall. She had a rather severe-looking face, thin lips, and dark, piercing eyes. Holt took her hand. It was cold and limp.

"I am Mr. Harding's stepdaughter," she explained. "I had no idea that he was so ill till his housekeeper wrote to us on Monday, when I came down at once. My brother hopes to be here to-morrow—at least, I have telegraphed for him to-day."

"I wrote——" began the housekeeper.

Miss Marsh went on, interrupting her:

"My stepfather is dying, Mr. Holt. It is very sad. Two hours ago he asked for the Vicar, whom he knows very well. He seems to have something on his mind, but he won't say what it is."

"I am sorry the Vicar is away," said Holt, in his slow, drawling manner; "but if I can be of any assistance, I shall be only too pleased."

Miss Marsh looked at him for a moment before she answered.

"I hope you may," she replied. "Will you come up? Oh, you need not trouble, Eliza," she said to the old servant.

Again it seemed to Holt that the old woman wanted to say something.

"Master Tom——" she began.

"I know," broke in Miss Marsh, as she led the way upstairs, "I'll explain to Mr. Holt. I dare say you have heard that my stepfather is a strange man?" she went on, stopping in the corridor upstairs.

"So I understand."

"He has had a sad estrangement from his son, and I think it is about that that he wants to speak to you."

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"I think," said Holt very decidedly, "that this son of his ought to be here. Is there no possible means of letting him know?"

"That is what Eliza is so upset about. It is most unfortunate. My brother and I are on very good terms with Tom; in fact, when my stepfather turned him away penniless he came to us, and my brother, who is a stock-broker, took him into his office, where he has been ever since. On Monday my brother had occasion to send suddenly to his Paris agent—he deals largely in Continental securities—and he selected Tom Harding as the most trustworthy messenger, not knowing, unfortunately, what was happening here. Tom had to start at once from his office. When my brother returned in the evening he found the letter from the housekeeper saying that his stepfather was dying. I left at once, and my brother said he would wire to Paris to recall Tom. In the meantime, Eliza had written to him by the same post, but you see he had gone to Paris before he could receive the letter."

"As you say," replied Holt, "the matter is very unfortunate, especially if there was any chance of a reconciliation."

"Please remember that Mr. Harding is very weak," said Miss Marsh, as she opened the door.

It was a very large room, dull and gloomy, for only a small lamp was burning in it. The lamp was at some little distance from the old-fashioned bed with its tester and curtains, so that the face of the man who lay thereon was in shadow.

Miss Marsh led the way to the bedside. It was a scene to which Merrick Holt, like most clergymen, was well accustomed. He looked at the face on the pillow. An old man, deathly pale, with a large, bristling moustache, and a white cotton nightcap drawn down over his forehead. He opened his eyes feebly. Miss Marsh told him who it was.

He put a hand slowly over the bedclothes. Holt took it.

"Thank you," he said. "It is kind—of you to come. Fanny—I would like to be—alone with him—please," and he motioned her to go.

She went. Holt sat down beside him and spoke a few comforting words to him in the exercise of his sacred office. His quiet, devotional manner evidently touched the old squire. Presently the latter said:

"I know I am dying, and I want you to do something. Will you?"

"Of course I will—if it is in my power."

"You know my story—perhaps—my son?"

"Yes, I have heard about it. I wish he could be here now. I hope he will come."

A sudden gleam lit up the sick man's eyes.

"I swore he should never enter my house again," he said.

Very kindly, but with considerable firmness, Holt spoke to him of forgiveness.

"However much he may have grieved you," he said, in conclusion, "you must try to have no unkind thoughts about him now."

There was a pause. Then Mr. Harding said slowly:

"That is why I sent for you. I have been hard on him. And last week—when I was taken ill—I thought about it—and I tore up my will. I had not left him anything."

"I am glad you did that."

"I want you—to draw up another—for me to sign."

Holt's face assumed a very thoughtful expression. The making of wills has, it is not generally known, a distinct part in a clergyman's office. He is instructed when visiting the sick to admonish a man to settle his worldly goods justly. And there are few clergymen of any experience who have not been actually called upon by force of circumstances to draw up a will for the dying to sign while there is yet time.

But naturally Merrick Holt hesitated. Such an action at all times involves a grave responsibility; while in this case the responsibility was heavily increased by the knowledge that the squire was possessed of considerable wealth. He looked narrowly at the sick man, listening anxiously to his labouring breath, and he felt that the hours were very precious.

"Would it not be better—a lawyer?" he began

"My lawyer is in London. There is no time," was the answer.

Holt was sitting by the bedside, his chin resting in his hand. A way out of the difficulty struck him.

"Why make a will at all?" he asked. "Your son is your next-of-kin."

Again the light that showed forgiveness was not yet complete flashed in the man's eyes.

"No," he said, "I will be just—but he disobeyed me. I will leave him well provided for—but I want to do something that would have pleased my dear wife."

Then, in broken accents, he expressed his wishes. He wanted Tom Harding to have two thousand pounds, and the whole of the

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remainder was to go to Richard Marsh. Richard, he said, was his wife's favourite son, and it was for her sake that he had arranged this. Holt listened attentively.

"And your stepdaughter?" he said.

"She is well provided for. She was the elder of the two, and inherited most of her father's property. And—I never cared for her."

Merrick Holt stroked his chin gravely.

"You *really* wish this?" he said.

"Yes—yes."

"You are asking me to undertake a grave responsibility, Mr. Harding, but it is difficult to refuse you. I will do so upon two conditions—first, that you give me your lawyer's address, in which case I intend wiring for him the first thing in the morning; secondly, that you intrust this will to my keeping upon the understanding that I shall deliver it to the lawyer immediately I see him."

The squire readily agreed, and gave the address and name, which Holt entered in his pocket-book. Then the latter took from his pocket his fountain pen, and slowly and carefully drew up a simple form of will, not omitting to write out the attestation clause in due form. He read it over to the sick man, who signified his approval. Then he rang the bell. Miss Marsh came in.

"Send for Eliza," said Mr. Harding, who was evidently growing more feeble.

When she came, Holt explained matters.

"We are to witness your master's will," he said.

"Is it all right, sir?" she asked Mr. Harding.

"Yes."

Holt nodded in corroboration. Still the old woman hesitated.

"You said you was a-goin' to leave Master Tom well off, sir," she said.

"Quite right," replied Holt. "He has done so."

Slowly and with great exertion the old man signed the will. Holt wrote his name, and Eliza Grigg followed with hers. Then the clergyman put the paper in his pocket. Miss Marsh, who had been a silent spectator, uttered a little exclamation of surprise.

"Quite right," said the squire.

Finally, Merrick Holt left, promising to call in the morning, but feeling that he would never again see the squire alive. Miss Marsh showed him down, waited in the hall while he put on his coat, and opened the door for him.

It was darker than ever outside, and pouring with rain. He carefully felt his way down the steps. The door closed behind him. Suddenly he felt a hand laid on his arm.

"Hush, sir. I stepped out through the side door."

It was the voice of the old housekeeper.

"What is it?" asked Holt.

"Please, sir, *is* it all right, sir? I'm afraid of her."

"Is what all right?"

"Master tore up his will last week, sir. He told me about it. He said he'd forgiven Master Tom. Oh, sir, why isn't Master Tom here?"

"He had to go abroad."

"Yes, sir—Miss Marsh told me so. I hope there ain't nothin' wrong."

"Now," said Holt in his slow, drawling manner, "you are under a great strain, and must not worry. You wrote to young Mr. Harding and to Mr. Marsh, didn't you? Quite so. When did you post the letters?"

"Monday morning, sir."

"Oh! Well, give me Tom Harding's address."

"Yes, sir. Number 18 Connaught Road, Harlesden."

"Very well, I shall remember."

"And Mr. Marsh's address is Copthall Buildings, sir. Number 9."

If Merrick Holt was at all surprised he only showed it by his silence. Presently he said:

"You sent the letter to him at Copthall Buildings?"

"Yes, sir."

"Now I really think you'd better go in. You might catch cold. Don't you worry yourself. Good-night!"

Merrick Holt did not go away directly after she was gone. Something seemed to have set him thinking, and it was one of the peculiarities of his calm nature that he could think the better when he was quite still.

He had moved a little away from the house, and was standing with his back against a tree. In front of him was the old Grange, with a light showing on the blind in the sick man's room.

Suddenly a shadow flitted across this blind, whereupon the Rev. Merrick Holt gave vent to a long, low whistle.

He stood still, leaning against the tree, for more than ten minutes. He was thinking of an excuse for returning to the house. To his great satisfaction he found one, and he coolly walked back to the Grange door, and gave a tremendous peal at the bell.

The door was opened by Miss Marsh, after

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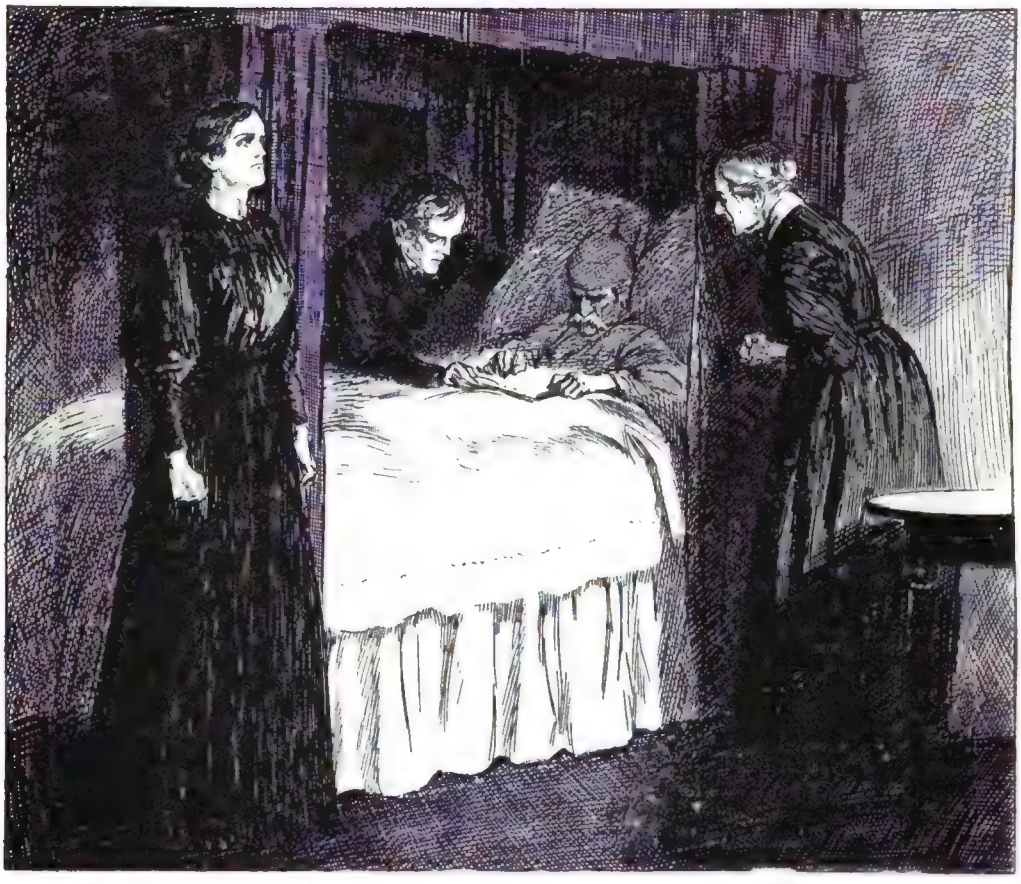

Slowly and with great exertion the old man signed the will.

a short interval; she looked very white and scared.

"I am so sorry to trouble you," said Merrick Holt, in his blandest and most drawling tone of voice, "but I think I must have left my fountain pen here. It is one I value very much, and I thought you wou'd not mind my disturbing you. Also might I ask if you would kindly lend me a lantern? I am a stranger here, and not accustomed to these dark country lanes, and I find it difficult to get along this very dark night."

"Oh—yes—certainly. You startled me, Mr. Holt. I thought it was Tom Harding."

"Ah—you are expecting him, of course—your brother's telegram should have brought him back to-day. Any change in the patient?"

A slight shiver went through the woman as she answered in a whisper:

"He—he—has passed away—just after you left."

"Oh, I am very sorry. Can I do anything to help you? It is fortunate perhaps that I returned."

It may have been that the woman was overcome with the shock. For the space of a minute she stood looking at him, her eyes almost starting out of her head, an anxious, strained expression upon her face. Then Holt said very quietly, and in the most natural way:

"I should like to see him, please."

For a moment she hesitated, but recovered herself.

"Certainly," she replied. "I was just going to ask Eliza to go up—and help me," she said.

They went up, Eliza in a paroxysm of tears. There, upon the pillow, was the white face of the old squire. He was lying very naturally, his hand just reaching over the coverlet.

Holt, who was only too familiar with the

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presence of death, stood for several minutes intent and motionless. Whatever thoughts disturbed him, his calm, impassive face showed no sign of them. Miss Marsh had sat down in a chair between him and the corpse.

Presently Holt crossed to the table, took up the lamp and a small hand-glass. Miss Marsh shot a swift glance at him. As he approached she took the glass from his hand with a nod.

"I know," she said, as she held it close to Squire Harding's open mouth, while Holt raised the lamp. But he was not looking at the dead man's face.

Then she took away the glass and showed him. There was no mark on it. Squire Harding was certainly dead.

Presently he said:

"It must have been very sudden at the last. Was there any struggle?"

"No. After you went he said very little. The effort of seeing you had tired him, and he passed away peacefully."

"May he rest in peace, and may his wishes be fulfilled!" said Holt, in a deeply solemn tone.

Miss Marsh found him a lantern. He promised to call the next day.

"I shall be thankful when my brother and Tom Harding come," were her last words to him.

As soon as he was out of the house he looked at his watch. It was just past ten.

"The last train to London leaves Wraysford at 10.43," he murmured to himself, "and the station's just over a mile and a half. Now, let me see. Ah, I have it!"

He walked briskly down the drive and out into the road. When he reached the signpost, instead of turning to Milton, he put out his lantern and took the other direction to Wraysford, as fast as he could hurry. It was half-past ten when he reached the little town. He went straight to the principal hotel there, and asked to see the landlord.

"I have walked in from Milton to meet the 10 43 train," he said, adhering to the truth, "and, as you see, I am wet through. I want a cab back to the Vicarage, and will you, please, dry my coat and hat while I go to the station—I dare say you can lend me something to put on."

The landlord was only too ready. Holt chose a drab mackintosh and a cap, which he drew down over his eyes. There were three or four minutes to spare before the train came in. Only half-a-dozen passengers were on the platform, and Holt lounged about among them. One man was standing at the end of the platform in the darkness, but the clergyman managed to have a look at him when he got into the train.

Before he left Wraysford he gave the hotel landlord two telegrams to hand into the post-office the first thing in the morning—one to the lawyer, the other to Tom Harding.

"I hope the rain has not spoilt my coat," was his remark as he went to bed that night; "I never had one that fitted me better."

Next morning, a little before midday, a cab drove up to the Vicarage, and an excited man jumped out.

"You asked me to come here before going to the Grange—what does it mean?"

"Mr. Thomas Harding, I presume?" drawled Holt. "So you had my wire. When did you return from Paris?"

"Only this morning. I had a wire yesterday saying my father was dying. I took the night boat and had time to run home before coming down here; there I found a letter and your telegram."

"Ah! You only heard yesterday, eh? At what time?"

"Quite late. There was only time to catch the train."

"I see. Well, Mr. Harding, I shall have much to explain to you. We are going to the Grange presently for a family meeting. Your poor father died yesterday. Come into the study, please."

Merrick Holt talked to him long and earnestly. And what he had to say caused Tom Harding unbounded astonishment.

* * * * *

A little group were gathered together in Squire Harding's musty old library. Miss Marsh sat there, pale, but very composed. Richard Marsh, a thin, clean-shaven man, rather like his sister, was explaining to Tom Harding that he had wired to Paris on the Monday, but as Tom had not returned he had sent a second telegram the previous afternoon.

"I never had your first wire," said Tom very shortly.

The Reverend Merrick Holt lounged in an easy chair. He was scrupulously dressed in his clerical attire. From time to time he gave a little hitch to the knees of his trousers, smoothing them complacently. He listened to what was being said, the description of the old squire's deathbed, but he offered no remarks. At a table, various papers in front of him, sat a little wizened man with a dry, legal face.

"I propose," he said presently, "that we transact our business. Mr. Holt telegraphed

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for me, and I understand that he has a communication of importance to make."

"Perhaps I may be allowed to explain my position," said Holt in his slow, monotonous voice. "The Vicar of the parish is away, and I am only the *locum tenens*. I attribute it to this circumstance that affairs have taken the present course. And I wish it to be understood that Miss Marsh was aware of the Vicar's absence before she sent for me."

"It was Mr. Harding who wished to see you, Mr. Holt," broke in Miss Marsh.

"I am coming to that. Pray pardon me if I am somewhat lengthy."

Then he proceeded to explain all that had happened up to the signing of the will, which he now produced and read.

One man was standing at the end of the platform in the darkness, but the clergyman managed to have a look at him when he got into the train.

There was silence for a minute. Then the lawyer said:

"As far as I am able to judge, this will is perfectly correct. I congratulate Mr. Holt on the very simple but effective terms in which he has drafted it."

Richard Marsh was trembling with excitement.

"I—I never expected this," he said, "I knew he was fond of me—but——"

Tom sat quite silent, his eyes fixed to the floor.

"Will you give me the will, please, Mr. Holt?" said the lawyer.

But still Holt lounged back in his chair, holding the precious paper.

"I felt it to be a great responsibility," he said, "and for that reason I kept the will when it was signed. And as I undertook a responsibility last night I am willing to be responsible for what I am going to do now." Then, with a sudden motion, that showed he could be alert enough when occasion required, he sprang to his feet, tore the will into pieces, and threw it into the fire.

For a moment horror and consternation seized all except Tom Harding, who quietly slipped to the door and locked it. Then Marsh dashed forward to the fire. But Merrick Holt caught him by both wrists and held him like a vice.

"You scoundrel!" shouted Marsh.

"*Tu quoque* is the polite way of replying to that," drawled Holt, who was perfectly calm.

"Do you know what you have done!" cried the lawyer. "Are you mad? This is contempt of the law. You have deliberately destroyed Mr. Harding's will."

"I have *not* destroyed Mr. Harding's will," replied Holt. "Mr. Harding never signed it."

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"What do you mean?" exclaimed Miss Marsh. "I was there, and——"

"*This* is the hand that signed the will," cried Holt, wrenching up Marsh's right hand. "I am ready to swear to this little tattooed ring on the middle finger. He forgot to cover it with grease paint. Look at his face!"

Marsh had gone deathly pale.

"It is a lie!" he said. "How dare you make such statements."

Holt let him go, and he sank back in his chair.

Miss Marsh was rigid and speechless. The lawyer looked from one to another in amazement.

"Explain!" he cried hoarsely.

"Certainly," replied Holt, "and I will take the consequences of everything. Let me put together the proofs. Not a quarter of an hour after the will was signed I saw the shadow of the man who had signed it on the blind from outside. I saw something else as well. He was tearing off a moustache. I could distinguish the outline of his face the next moment *without it*. When I returned to the house some quarter of an hour later I was taken to see the dead body of Mr. Harding. He certainly was dead, but how long he had been so I could not tell—Miss Marsh took care not to let me touch him. But I guessed the truth when I saw his hand, for I had noticed that little dark ring on the finger of the man who had forged the signature. My chain of evidence was complete when I came into the room just now and saw in Richard Marsh the man who took the last train from Wraysford last night."

"How——?" began Marsh, and then stopped.

"How do I know? I was at the station. I can give you more proofs. When you sent Mr. Tom Harding to Paris you knew your stepfather was dying. You had received Eliza's letter at your office—you wanted Tom Harding out of the way. You miserable scoundrel!"—and he drawled out the words in a contemptuous tone—"what have you to say to this? Would you like to dispute it in a court of law?"

Marsh got up pale and trembling. For a minute he looked at Merrick Holt as though he would murder him, but that individual merely brushed away some specks of dust from his waistcoat and returned his gaze quite calmly. Then he gave way.

"I—I—will confess everything if you will let me go. I——"

"Stop. It was not his fault. Let me take the blame. *I* did it!"

They all looked at Miss Marsh.

"Yes," she said, in a low voice, "it is all true—but the fault is mine. He thought if he could get Tom away at the last that Mr. Harding might be disposed to—to—make his will in his favour. But that was all he thought. I came down here on Monday night and found my stepfather dying. Then I was tempted. I planned it all. I wired the next morning telling my brother not to come till he heard from me, and I wrote to him detailing my plan. There was only Eliza in the house, and I thought she would never guess. My brother was good at amateur theatricals, and once he had made up like Mr. Harding.

"The difficulty was to obtain the other witness, but a copy of the local parish magazine solved this, and I determined to make use of the clergyman—who had never seen my stepfather. He, my stepfather, died yesterday—in the early afternoon. I kept Eliza away from the room and wired to my brother some words I had agreed upon in my letter. He arranged for a telegram to be sent to Tom late in the day and came down here after dusk. We—we—put the body back in the bed directly Mr. Holt had gone."

"And the leaving of two thousand pounds to Mr. Tom Harding was to allay suspicion, I suppose?" broke in the lawyer.

"Yes—there—I have told all—it was my fault—spare my brother—I am willing to suffer—only let him go," and the miserable woman broke down.

"The decision must rest with Mr. Tom Harding," the lawyer said sharply.

Tom hesitated a moment. Then he said: "Mr. Holt, I am under a debt of the deepest gratitude to you. You have acted throughout this terrible business. I want the decision to rest with you, please."

Merrick Holt rose from his seat.

"My office is to exhort and not to punish," he said slowly. "I rather pronounce the Higher forgiveness on those who are penitent. I have been the means of frustrating a terrible crime and deception. The memory of what you have both done will never leave you, and your punishment, even though you repent, will be the deepest of all punishments—that of remorse. Mr. Harding will understand that he loses nothing by not prosecuting you. In the sacred name of the dead whom you have wronged I say to you—go from this house!"

He took the key from Tom and unlocked the door. Slowly, and in silence, the brother and sister left the room.

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A DAY IN THE LIFE OF A RAILWAY CLAIMS CLERK.

An Account of His Dealings with Fraudulent Claimants for Damages.

By G. A. Sekon,

Editor of the "Railway Magazine."

If the reader saw my desk each morning as I find it, covered with piles of "Claim reports," he would probably conclude that my work must be extremely monotonous. I should agree with the reader, provided my duties consisted only of reading the stereotyped set of questions on the form and the briet answers supplied to these questions by the various members of the railway staff concerned.

In many cases, however, these questions and answers provide the prologue to interesting—nay, frequently exciting—episodes in my work.

"Truth is stranger than fiction," and so I often find it. But let me initiate the reader into some of the mysteries of my calling.

Jones of Wolverhampton sends a consignment of iron pails to Smith at Hull.

After the goods have been delivered, Smith complains that some are missing and others damaged, and claims £10 10*s.* as compensation.

Seeing that the goods have been carried at "Owner's risk," at a reduced rate, the claim could be refused, but in many such cases we make a payment *ex gratia*. Before doing so, however, we have to obtain the sanction of the other railways.

The procedure is as follows:—Every three weeks a meeting of the claims clerks of the various railways is held at the Railway Clearing House, and each clerk brings forward his claims, stating briefly the salient points of each claim, and ending up with proposing either that the claim be, or be not, paid. The claim clerks of the other railways then say if they agree with the suggestion, and if necessary vote on the proposals, the results being decided by the majority of votes.

The above is much a matter of routine, and as the payment of claims is so much money thrown away by the railway, a good part of my duty consists in tracing out the cause of the loss or damage, and devising means to prevent the recurrence of such cases.

So far I have only referred to straightforward claims, but there are numbers that cannot come within this category; some arise through honest mistakes, but, alas, many are downright attempts to defraud the railway.

Here is a curious case of the former. An engineer in the Midlands sent a consignment of five boxes of plans, etc., from his office to London; four of the boxes were duly delivered, but the fifth could not be found; the five had been signed for by the carman, and checked off at the station, but there, after that, only four could be traced. After three months of negotiation, we had agreed to pay £45 compensation for the lost box; the cheque was drawn, and only waiting signature before being dispatched to the engineer, when I received a telegram from the local station stating that the lost box of plans had been found.

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An assistant saw the box marked "Midge's Ink" outside the shop, and placed it in the store.

It appears that the engineer's offices in the Midland town were over a stationer's shop. The plans had been packed in a second-hand box, marked outside "Midge's Inks." Our carman carried the boxes downstairs one at a time; placed each outside the shop till he had fetched the lot down. He signed for the five boxes in the offices upstairs when he brought the fifth down.

Whilst engaged in bringing down the boxes, an assistant at the stationer's saw the box marked "Midge's Ink" outside the shop, and under the impression that it was a case of ink just arrived, placed it in the store. There it remained for many weeks, until the stationer required a fresh supply of ink in his shop; and when the box of Midge's ink in the store was opened, it contained not ink, but—the engineer's plans! It will be noticed that the checker at the goods station had actually checked off five cases as being received from the carman, although he could have received only four.

It is now twelve o'clock, and a man calls according to appointment to try to agree to the amount due to him for a lost box of clothing.

He comes, I can see, well dressed for the occasion. Amongst the amounts claimed are: Suit of clothes, £4 4*s.*; ties, 1*s.* 6*d.* each; collars, 10*d.* each; cuffs, 1*s.* 6*d.* a pair; socks, 2*s.* pair; boots, 25*s.* pair, etc.

This person gives me an opportunity of displaying the result of my experience as well as my general knowledge of values. The claimant is seated in front of me in a good light, so that when I am talking to him I can at the same time carefully scrutinise the quality of his clothes, and so arrive at the value of them.

I can see that, although dressed for the appointment, the clothing he is wearing is not so expensive as that he claims for. His suit probably cost 50*s.*, his tie is obviously a 6½*d.* one, and his collar could be purchased for 5*d.*, whilst his boots I can see are of the quality retailed at 10*s.* 6*d.* the pair.

In the course of conversation I delicately point out that the outfit he is now wearing is not so expensive as the one claimed for in the missing box, and insinuate that the lost clothes would not have been of better quality than those he is wearing.

After a good deal of fencing, he tacitly agrees with my proposition, and then there only remains the assessing of the value of the clothes when lost, on the basis of the accepted value when new. In the course of a fifteen-minutes' interview he has agreed to accept £7 12*s.* in settlement of his claim for £18 8*s.* 4*d.*

No sooner has he gone than Mr. Isaac Jacobs and his wife Leah arrive, with a view to the settlement of their claim for a box of lost clothing. In this case no spirit of "sweet reasonableness" is evinced by the claimants.

"Their clothes were worth £18, the railway had lost them, and we must pay him the £18. No, he would not accept £17 19*s.* 11*d.* if I offered it to him now in golden sovereigns."

I am pretty well used to this style of argument, and I find it better to keep those who adopt it at arm's length; so I refuse to make any offer, and tell him to consult his solicitor; a phrase I intend to be interpreted as "Take

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out a summons against the railway in the county court, and let the judge decide what you are entitled to."

There are three advantages in such a course. Firstly, we know the judge is hardly likely to give people all they claim; secondly, the claimant, seeing I am not to be "bluffed," may agree to accept a reasonable sum; and, thirdly, in the two or three months that will expire before the case is heard, the missing box may turn up, and then we can hand it over to the owner instead of paying compensation.

I would here observe that in all such cases the owners "would much rather have their own things than money," although when missing boxes *do* turn up they are greatly disappointed that they have to accept them in place of the money value they have claimed.

Isaac and Leah take their departure, and a few weeks after, in turning out some boxes in our Lost Property Office, preparatory to cataloguing the contents for auction, we come across a box of dilapidated clothing, and in the pocket of a worn-out coat find a letter addressed to Mr. Isaac Jacobs.

We immediately communicate with this man, and tell him his box of clothing, value £18! has been found, and awaits his orders.

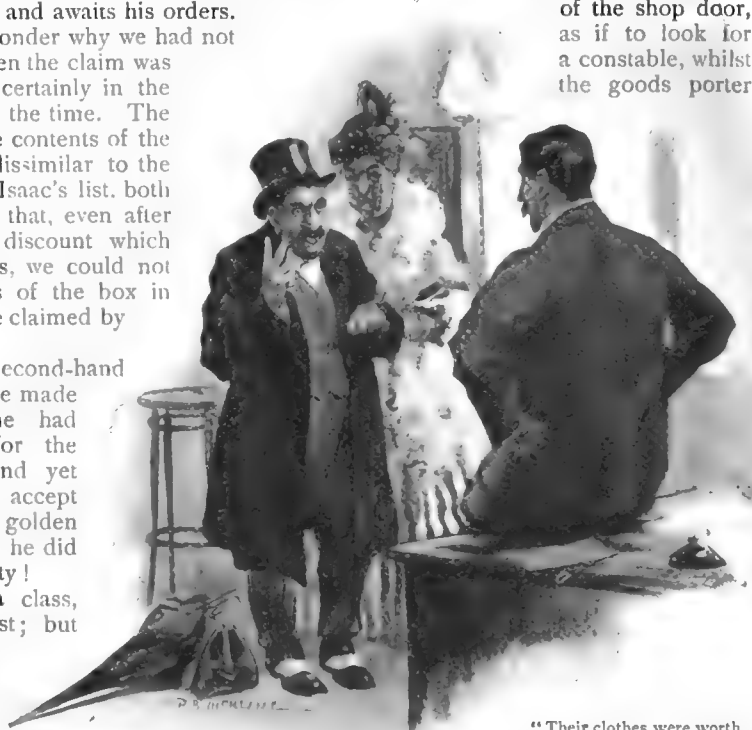
You will probably wonder why we had not discovered the box when the claim was first made, as it was certainly in the Lost Property Office at the time. The answer is obvious; the contents of the box were so entirely dissimilar to the articles mentioned on Isaac's list, both in character and value, that, even after taking off the usual discount which our experience dictates, we could not recognise the contents of the box in question as being those claimed by Isaac Jacobs.

I may say that any second-hand clothes man would have made a bad bargain if he had given a sovereign for the box and contents, and yet Isaac "would not accept £17 19*s.* 11*d.* in golden sovereigns"—but then he did not have the opportunity!

Railway men, as a class, are scrupulously honest; but there are black sheep amongst them as in other businesses. A goods porter who stole a roll of silk did not find it a very profitable transaction. He took the silk to a receiver of stolen property, and the latter, after examining the material, glanced out of his window in an apparently casual manner, and then said in an excited tone: "The police are coming," and lifting up the flap of the counter, "go through the kitchen into the yard, open the gate, and get up the lane as quickly as you can." The porter was not long in making good his escape from the shop of the receiver.

The next day he called again, and told the receiver he had come for the money for the silk he had brought on the previous day. The man affected not to know the porter, and asked him to state definitely what he meant, so the thief blurted out: "I've called for the money for the roll of stolen silk I brought you yesterday; you remember I had to run out the back way because the police were coming."

The receiver immediately raised his voice and shouted to his wife: "Mary, fetch a policeman; here's a railway porter accusing me of receiving stolen goods. I'll soon see whether an honest tradesman's to have his character taken away in this manner." The wife at once went out of the shop door, as if to look for a constable, whilst the goods porter



"Their clothes were worth £18, the railway had lost them, and we must pay him the £18."

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once again made use of the back exit, and put space as quickly as possible between himself and the shop. He ever afterwards gave the street in which it was situated a wide berth.

It is, however, in the transit of casks of spirits that considerable pilfering takes place. The trucks containing these casks are sometimes left in sidings for several hours at a time, and then, for men who "know the ropes," it is easy to make a visit to a truck, broach a barrel, and extract gallons of the contents.

In such cases it is difficult to detect the thief, and one of my men sometimes travels, stowed away in the truck under the tarpaulin, for the purpose of catching the offender. Very likely he will be discovered before the truck reaches the spot where the broaching takes place. Then, of course, he must disclose himself, and put off the attempt at detection for that journey.

There was one goods guard very popular all down the line, and as frequent robberies of spirits took place from trains under his care, I made efforts to discover how and where the pilfering took place. One of my men was appointed a night shunter at ——, and when the train with the whisky drew up, he was invited by the other two shunters to "come and have a drink." They led the way to a truck containing the spirit, and lifting a corner of the tarpaulin, the old hands disclosed a pipe in the form of a syphon, one end being inserted in a whisky barrel; the shunters applied their mouths to the other end, and so took a good swill of the spirit, and invited my man to do the same.

After the train had passed on, the new shunter—praising the whisky—inquired how it was managed; and the old hands explained that a man up the line fitted up the contrivance with the knowledge of the guard, and another man at the stop previous to the terminus removed it, and that all men *en route* who partook of the surreptitious drinks paid a few pence weekly to the guard *for looking the other way*.

There was another train from which spirits were frequently stolen, and it was only by an accident that we discovered how it was done. The train was watched for weeks and weeks continuously at every stopping place, and still the casks were broached and the thief undetected.

At last one day I sent a cask of specially prepared spirit by the train. Everything went as usual up to the last stopping place before the journey's end. Here, as was his habit, the guard gave the right away signal: but upon arrival of the train at the terminus he was nowhere to be found.

A groan of agony was, however, heard emanating from the truck containing the spirit; and when the tarpaulin was removed, the guard was discovered with a can full of the spirit from the doctored cask. He had drunk a portion, and this had the effect desired, as it had immediately acted upon him, and made him incapable of leaving the truck.

We thus obtained an explanation of these mysterious robberies. The guard, after the train had made its last call on its journey, had been in the habit of climbing into the truck *en route*, broaching a cask, and returning to his van before the train arrived at the end of the journey. He used to hide the stolen whisky by hanging the can beneath the bottom of a truck until the coast was clear for him to remove it.

It is when we have to deal with people who lay themselves out to swindle us that we have to be exceptionally smart. Some of these gentry make a respectable living out of claims against railways.

There was a furniture dealer in a town served by four railways, who never received anything without making a claim for damages. As there were four railways to distribute his favours amongst, my turn did not come round so often as at once to excite suspicion regarding the *bona fides* of the claims; but at last my suspicions were aroused.

In claims of this character we always ask to see the maker's invoice, so that we can, in a measure, protect ourselves against excessive claims. If two cabinets, one costing £5, and another £12 12*s*., are damaged to the same extent, it is evident that if £1 be sufficient compensation in the one case, the other will necessitate about £2 10*s*. being paid as satisfaction.

This man was always claiming for breakages of expensive articles, and produced the invoices as evidence of value. When I inspected the goods it was obvious that they were not of the value indicated. Different manufacturers were always involved, and as they could scarcely all be in collusion with the man, the cases were somewhat of a mystery.

So I set one of our detectives to make inquiries, with the result that he discovered that the man used occasionally to spend a day in London visiting various furniture factories, and whilst doing so took the opportunity of obtaining some of the invoice forms, bill heads, etc., of the various firms; these he

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filled up himself, exactly describing the article he was claiming in respect of, but inserting a price far in excess of what he had given for it.

That man has long since given up the furniture business, and has been a guest of His Majesty, consequent upon his success in obtaining payments from railways of extortionate claims.

In the case of personal injury also, the unscrupulous, tricky person sends in claims that are grossly exaggerated in every particular, and at times distinctly fraudulent. To be in a train that meets with an accident is, to men of this class, considered to be better than many weeks of "spotting the winner at long odds"; whilst to be actually injured is to them equal to "breaking the bank at Monte Carlo."

My first introduction to the manufacture of claims for personal injury by travellers was a startling one, indeed. It was this circumstance that obtained me promotion to the Claims Department, for at the time I was in quite a different sphere of railway activity.

I happened to be travelling on the company's business, and when the train arrived at the terminus, the driver made a very bad stop, and struck the buffers with considerable violence, with the result that a good many people, who were standing, preparatory to alighting, were thrown off their feet.

There was one other passenger in the compartment in which I was travelling, and as soon as we felt the bump caused by the engine charging the 'dead end,' this man took off his silk hat, placed it on the floor, and jumped on it, and then rammed it on his head. I was greatly surprised at his peculiar action, but more so when he asked me "to give him a black eye." I suppose amazement was expressed by my countenance at this request, as he at once added: "Look sharp and do it; it is worth a £5 note to you." As I did not immediately comply with his request, he proceeded to strike himself violently in the face, and then, doubling his head under one of the seats, lay with his legs in an uncomfortable position across the floor.

It had by this time occurred to me why he was thus acting in this strange way, so I alighted and waited outside the carriage door.

Porters, and other railway men with ambulance training, were not long in making their appearance, and they soon arrived at the compartment containing my fellow-passenger. After a good deal of trouble the man was extricated from his uncomfortable position.

The receiver shouted to his wife: "Mary, fetch a policeman; here's a railway porter accusing me of receiving stolen goods."

Naturally he was unconscious! The usual methods of restoration failed to have any effect, so the men made an examination, and finding no bones broken, the passenger was placed on a stretcher, and carried to a waiting-room, pending the arrival of a doctor. I followed, and on the way met my chief. In a few words I explained the case to him, and was told to telephone to our police-office for the chief of that department.

Then, the doctor having arrived, he was told of the circumstances. After a consultation as to the mode of procedure, we all proceeded to the waiting-room.

The man was still unconscious, and the doctor began to make an examination. He had not gone far before he commenced to inject into the man's mouth a vile-tasting compound. The injured passenger was not prepared for this peculiar treatment, and at

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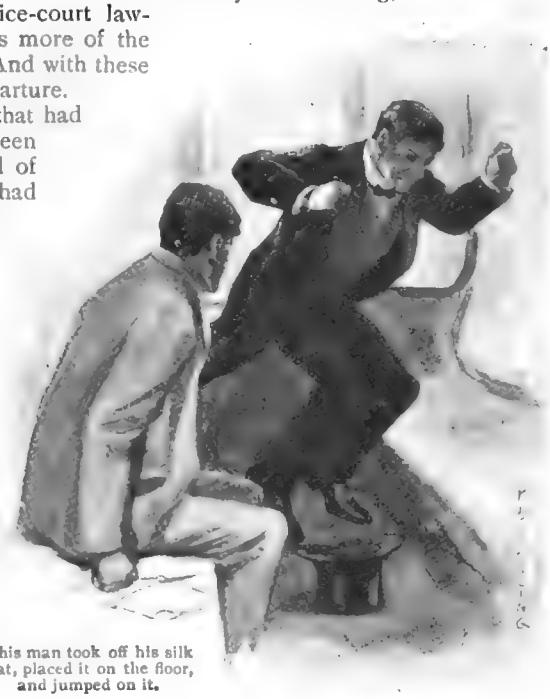
once commenced to splutter. At this moment I chimed in: "You need not trouble about this man, doctor; he's only shamming," and I gave a brief *résumé* of what had occurred in the railway carriage.

By the time I had finished the "injured" passenger had quite revived, so the chief of our police department took him in hand, and in the course of a few words told him what was likely to happen to him as the result of his fraudulent malingering. But the man evidently had a good knowledge of the legal aspect of the case, and quickly answered: "Wait till I make a claim before you talk of fraud! Call yourself chief of the railway police—ooh! A police-court lawyer's office boy knows more of the law than you do!" And with these words he took his departure.

There is no doubt that had his fellow traveller been an accomplice instead of a railway servant, or had he been travelling alone, the railway company would have paid him heavy compensation, or would have been involved in an expensive law suit in contesting his claim.

Rather recently, amongst the injured in an accident, was a German, who gave a high-sounding name, prefixed with "Baron von."



This man took off his silk hat, placed it on the floor, and jumped on it.

A foreign noble could hardly be expected to be properly provided for by the hotel accommodation available in the small town adjacent to the scene of the accident, so the rector generously placed the rectory at the baron's disposal.

But even the real injuries received by a baron at last mend under the skill of the eminent doctors retained by railway companies, and it was evident that the baron must soon vacate the comfortable rectory. At last he did so, and when the clerical host and the railway's representative desired to be favoured with his home address in hospitable England, he, with evident reluctance, gave the number of a mean street in the East-end of London! Inquiries in the neighbourhood showed that the "Baron von ——" carried on the trade of a sweating tailor, under the prosaic and doubtless correct name of Moses Weinberg!

The biggest "claim" I ever had to deal with was one for a modest million pounds!

The claimant was brought to my office from the General Offices of the Railway, where he had called to prefer his claim. He stated, by way of introduction, that he was a literary man, who had devoted the whole of his time for forty years to research on a most fascinating, but little known subject, and that the result of his life's work was embodied in a manuscript, which he made into a parcel, and left at one of our station cloak rooms two years ago. Continuing, he said that he had recently made application for it, but the parcel could not be found. He could produce no cloakroom ticket, but gave a most minute account of the circumstances, describing the man who took in the parcel, where it was placed in the cloak room, and the date and time of day at which it was left.

Upon my inquiring how he arrived at £1,000,000 as the value of his parcel, he replied that he had read that Sir Walter Scott's literary work was worth £1,000,000, and, therefore, he had accepted that sum as the value of his own forty years' labour.

I promised to look into the matter, and he departed. As soon as my door was closed I heard a scuffle in the corridor, and upon looking out saw my late visitor being led away by a stalwart man, whose face displayed the self-satisfied smirk worn by keepers employed at lunatic asylums, when rejoicing over the capture of an escaped patient.

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The Story of a Coster's Country Bank Holiday.

By Brinsley Moore.

Alf Jones—that's my name. An' it's one as I guess used to be pritty well known down Whitechapil w'y. Me and my barrer was fairly wot yer might call a local institoo-tion down there. An' there wasn't a coster-monger in the distric' better known for good stuff at a reason'ble price an' a voice as could kerry down two streets an' round the corner as well.

It's heridit'ry, too — both the barrer and the voice. Me old dad 'ad 'em both afore me. As long as 'e lived I 'elped 'im at the business; and when 'e died orf I jest went on at it as if nothink 'ad 'eppened. An' but for a bloomin' mistake, as yer may s'y, I should be at it still. But I found a better job than pushin' a barrer and callin' epples an' termarters.

'Ow? Well, it reely caime abaht threw Eliza. Eliza's the gel as I'd allus thought *might* be Mrs. Alfred somed'y. 'Er mother lived in Piper's Alley, and took in manglin', bein' given to drink. But Eliza's allus 'ad a big idee of bein' a cut above the ord'nary, owin' to havin' got into service in 'igh families. An' it was threw Eliza and 'er 'igh families as I got me lift.

She'd been at 'ome for a few weeks between two of 'er plaices, an' I'd bin walkin' 'er out of a Sund'y arternoon long enough to see as we pritty well agreed on most subjec's as caime across our thoughts. It was on the Wissentite Mond'y out at 'Empstid as I fine'ly maide up my mind and arsked her str'ight out.

Well, she didn't s'y "no," an' she didn't s'y "yiss." She was goin', yer see, to a new plaice as under-'ousemaid at Effington Court, an' consequently 'er notions was a bit 'igh at the time. An' she said that while she'd no perticler objection to me meself, she didn't mean ter get spliced till she could see a decent 'ome ready fer 'er to go into.

I'm tellin' yer this so as you'll understand the sort she is—not one of yer flashy gels as is satisfied so long as they kin get a new 'at and feathers, but a good, stiddy, thinkin' sort o' lass as would lead a feller raight and keep 'im ep to the mark. So it was settled as the thing should stand over at present, while both of us saived up wot we could.

A day or two arter, she went orf to her new plaice, promisin' to write reg'lar. An' a fine letter-writer she was, sendin' me every week all as was 'eppinin', put down in words so clear as I could almost see the things as she wrote abaht. An' well spelt, too, which is a p'int as I never could manage meself.

But letters, arter all, aren't everythink, and

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as time went on I began to find as I were missin' 'er more than you'd 'ave ixpected. It got so bad at larst that I wrote an' said as I thought of comin' down to Effington Court on August Bank 'Ollerd'y arternoon to 'ave a look at 'er, if she saw 'er w'y to get an hour or two orf.

But I'd jest posted this letter when there caime one from 'er, sayin' wot gran' doin's they were goin' to 'ave at Effington Court on the very d'y I 'ad fixed on ter go. Laidy Starchley was givin' a gardin party to all the big folks for miles round; a grand do, with a past'ral play, a thought-readin' man from Ameriky, an' a swell singer from London as she called Mr. Cavalier—though I found arter thet she 'adn't got the naime quite raight.

There was so much in the letter abaht the preparations as were bein' made thet I felt shaw my own little plan wouldn't work; Eliza 'ud be too busy thet d'y at anyrate to give any time to me. I'd almost settled ter go ter Greenwich with Teddy Riley instead, when another letter caime from Eliza. She said that the d'y I 'ad fixed on would do very well. All the caterin' and waitin' for the gardin party was bein' done, yer see, by contrac' by a big firm in town, an' the 'ousekeeper 'ad told her thet she could get orf from four to six. I was ter go down by the arternoon tr'ine, an' arsk for 'er in the servants' 'all; an' she was lookin' forward to seein' me very much arter so long a separation.

Well, Bank 'Ollerd'y caime, an' I went. I didn't wish to bring no disgrace on Eliza, an' make 'er ashaimed o' me afore the other servants; so I rigged meself up in me best—the big-check suit with the pearl buttons, an' a new 'at as was the envy of ev'ry chap as I showed it to. Wot with thet, an' a cigar, an' a rose or two in me button-'ole, I guess thet I looked the sort o' feller as any gel might be proud ter 'ave comin' to see 'er.

It's a little country station thet you get out at for Effington Court, and I was the on'y pessenger as got down thet arternoon. When the tr'ine 'ad gorn on, I was arstin' the station-master abaht a short ket across the fields thet Eliza 'ad told me of, when 'ep comes a swell sort o' chep as was waitin' there at the station door with a mighty fine kerridge an' pair.

"Are you the gen'leman as is ixpected from London?" he says.

"Ixpected where?" I arst.

"At Effington Court," said he. "Laidy Starchley 'as sent the kerridge so as to saive time if you caime by this tr'ine."

"An' very kind of 'er laidyshep it is," I said. I felt shaw, yer know, as she'd think a lot of Eliza, but I 'adn't expected 'er to go as far as this.

As I was gettin' into the kerridge, the station-master bloke turns up again.

"There's a telegrarft thet 'as jest come for Laidy Starchley," he says "Would yer be good enough to taike it with yer? It'll save some time if you would."

"Raight yer are, ol' cock," says I willin'ly. "I'll see that she 'as it at oncj."

Then the futman bengs the door, and orf we druve in fine style.

Now, yer see, it was the first time as ever I'd ridden in a real kerridge, and I couldn't 'elp thinkin' 'ow much Eliza must be rispected to 'ave the kerridge sent for 'er visitors. I reckon it was dwellin' on this as maide me so thet I didn't notice things as I should 'ave done. Eliza 'ad impressed it on me in 'er letters to be shaw an' arsk for 'er at the servants' door. But when we turned in at Effington Court, that silly fool of a coachman, without arstin' me at all, druve raight ep to the front door and, afore I could see wot 'e was ep to, set me down slap in the middle of the gardin party.

My! wasn't it a sight! A crowd o' reel lords and laidies all decked out in their best, and all sittin' at little taibles 'avin' their teas. A fine laidy, very tall and dignified, caime ep as I got out of the kerridge. She seemed at first a bit surprised ter see who it was. But, I thought, it isn't *my* mistaike as we're kem to the front; so I tried to put the best face on it.

"I 'ave bin arst," I said very rispectful, "to plaice this 'ere telegrarft in the 'ands of Laidy Starchley immejet without fail."

So she took the telegrarft an' opened it. When she'd read it, she turned to me quite altered and smilin'.

"Oh, it's so good of you to come—and at such short notice, too, Mr. ——," she says, stoppin' ter me naime.

"Jones," I says perlitely; "Alfred Jones, at yer service."

"So very good of you, Mr. Jones. And such a nice, clever idea to come ready dressed."

Well, I was a bit flabbergasted at thet, as you may guess, an' I suppose I looked it.

"Your clothes, I mean," she says. "Such a good idea, for a busy man like you, to save time by putting them on before you arrived."

"Oh," I says, suddinly seein' daylight, "you mean these 'ere togs. Well, yer see, it isn't orfen as I taike an 'ollerd'y, but when

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I do, I like ter look me best—especially knowin' as Eliza was in sich a haristercratic sitooation. Raythcr spicey, isn't it?" I says, turnin' round so as she could see the set of the coat at the back.

"Oh, you funny man!" she says, goin' orf into fits of larfter. "But now, come, after your journey, you must be simply dying for a cup of tea.'

And with that she leads me orf to a little taible, and arsts me to set down. Then a couple of waiters brought me as grand a tea as yer could wish for; and, as I was a bit peckish, I did my dooty by it. There was two slap up young laidies settin' at the same taible as me. One of them I found out was Laidy Starchley's daughter—a nettylookin' gel enough; not, o' course, like Eliza, bein' slenderer, an' not so red in the arms and faice, but for all that the sort as nobody 'ud be ashaimed to walk out. She larft so pleasant-like every time as I looked at 'er, that I felt as she must be agreeable comp'ny—on'y bein' in a 'urry ter git to Eliza, I aimed at settlin' me tea as quick as possible.

"There's a telegrarft thet 'as jest come for Laidy Starchley," he says. "Would yer be good enough to taike it with yer?"

Jest as I was finishin' orf, a clean-shaven gen'leman in specs, as seemed ter 'ave the management o' things in 'and, got ep on a platform as was set in the middle, and made 'em a bit of a speech.

'E said as 'e was sorry to ennounce thet the swell singer from London 'ad jest telegrarfted to Laidy Starchley ter s'y that 'e couldn't come arter all, but was sendin' a substitoot as 'e was shaw would give setisfaction.

When 'e'd done 'is palaver, I was turnin' round to ixplain as Eliza 'ud be lookin' out fer me, when Laidy Starchley comes ep an' says, very gracious:

"And now, Mr. Jones, as I know you are in a hurry, I will ask you to sing first."

Well, yer know. I've never set ep for bein' wot you might call a singer. It's troo that of a Mond'y night, amongst me own pals at the "Costers' Arms," I *'ave* now an' again tipped 'em a stave or two jest ter share in the gen'ral 'armony—and I guess as Eliza 'ad bin talkin' to 'er mistress, and in course o' conversation 'ad told her abaht it. But I felt as it wasn't at all the sort o' stuff to put afore lords and laidies like these. 'Owever, I says to meself, it'll be pore manners, arter the 'andsome w'y in which you've bin received an' the tea as you've eat, to refuse a little thing like this.

"We kin on'y do our best," I says; "so 'ere goes."

"Would you like to see the pianist first?" says Laidy Starchley. "He is quite prepared

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to accompany anything you want, if you will just give him the necessary hints."

"Pianist?" I says. "No, thenk yer. I'm best without thet. The music on'y puts me out."

With thet, I mounted the platform an' struck ep.

I thought I'd give 'em "'Appy 'Empstid," as it was the thing as I remembered most; but, bein' a bit flurried at the time, I struck it too 'igh, and at the end of the fifth line I 'ad ter stop and start again lower down. But they took it very well, and clepped jest as if it was part of the performance. 'Owever, I got all raight at larst, an' mighty pleased they were at it, ter jedge by the w'y they kipt on cleppin' and callin' out "oncore." Knowin' me manners enough ter see that I must ecknowledge the compliment, I went on again, and sang them "All on the Booze." It's a song, mind yer, as I shouldn't 'ave chose if I could 'ave thought of another, bein' wot *I* should call a bit low and common in plaices—but, lor, them gentle-folks seemed ter like it all the better for that, and were jest doubled ep with larfter.

When I'd finished it, the cleppin' begun again, an' they seemed as if they wouldn't ever leave orf. But, yer see, I couldn't stop there foolin' all the arternoon, an' the time was gettin' on. So I got ep on that platform an' ixplained.

"Lords and laidies," I says, "I'm feelin' this 'ere reception of my 'umble efforts very mech, and thenk yer kindly. But," I says, "I didn't come 'ere to amuse you, but to see Eliza, which is Laidy Starchley's under-'ousemaid. An' Eliza'll think it a rem go," I says, "if 'er young man leaves 'er to 'erself, an' spends all 'is time with the quality."

Then it struck me as pr'aps I'd gorn a bit too far in callin' meself 'er "young man"; so I thought I'd better make clear as it wasn't a real ingagement yet, but on'y on tri'le, as it were. And that led me on to tell 'em jest wot Eliza 'ad said when I arst 'er, an' 'er idee of waitin' ter see if I could saive ep a bit.

"For, mind you," I says, "Eliza's a reel sensible sort as can do a lot to keep a chep like me stiddy and str'ight."

Well, they all larft at thet, as if Eliza was a joke, and it riled me a good bit. So I jest stepped to the edge of the platform and gave it them plain.

"Now you look 'ere," I says, my dander bein' ep, "this is no larfin' matter ter me. Eliza may be on'y a hunder-'ousemaid an' in a 'umble persition; but I can tell yer there ain't a laidy in the land," I says, "as 'as got a nobler and a truer 'eart than 'er."

I was so 'ot abaht it that they looked a bit taken to fer a minute; then they all began cleppin' like mad, ispecially the clean-shaven gen'leman in specs. I suppose it was the cleppin' as led me on, for afore I knew wot I was doin' I found that I was tellin' them 'ow Eliza when on'y a little gel 'ad worked all d'y at the match-fact'ry, an' set up all night nursin' little Bill as was sufferin' with 'is spine an' allus in pain.

I told 'em 'ow the pore little kiddie couldn't bear nobody else to kem near 'im, an' was blubbin' all the time as she was aw'y at work. An' when I caime to the d'y as he died, and she got the sack at the fact'ry 'cause she would stop at 'ome an' look arter 'im, the mother bein' on the drink—why, they was all as solemn as a funeral, an' some o' them fine laidies looked fair ready to cry.

Well, yer see, I felt as it 'ud never do to leave them in the dumps like that, so though I 'adn't meant ter spend no more time on them, I jest pitched 'em in another song ter liven 'em up a bit. It was one as Teddy Riley 'ad made abaht me and Eliza goin' out fer a 'ollerd'y—'ow we changed 'ats and slepped each other's backs, an' rolled one another down the 'ill.

While they were all larfin' an' cleppin', and Laidy Starchley was s'yin' to everybody round 'er: "Isn't it *awfully* clever and life-like?" I jumped down an' got 'old of one of them waiter chaps ter show me the w'y to the servants' 'all. As we was goin' I 'ad ter pass that clean-shaven ole feller in specs, and I 'eard 'im s'y to a friend:

"Well, I don't know who he is, but anyhow, they've managed to unearth a genius from somewhere."

I was 'arf a mind ter stop and arst 'im if 'e was applyin' them naimes ter me; but I knew if I was ter see Eliza at all, I mestn't waste no more time on them toffs, so I jest 'erried on. When we got to the servants' 'all, there shaw enough was Eliza almost in tears with diseppointment, thinkin' as I 'ad missed me tr'ine.

She cheered ep a bit when she saw me; but she looked me ep and down rayther critical like.

"I wish," says she, "as you would dress a bit quieter," she says, "ispecially when you kem inter the country. It's all raight in Whitechapil," she says, "where it's ixpected; but they'd reckon it vulgar down 'ere. On'y

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"Now look you 'ere," I says, my dander bein' up, "this is no larfin matter ter me."

think if Laidy Starchley was ter see you got up like that!"

"Why," I says, "wot d'yer mean? These 'ere togs? Why, 'er laidyshep's seen 'em already, an' thought 'em very spicey."

She looked astonished at that, and more when I went on to tell 'er abaht the gardin' party and the honour as 'ad bin showed me. She didn't seem as if she could taike it in at all. But when I got ter the singin', she almost burst out cryin' again.

"Wot?" she says, lookin' 'orrerfied, "you've bin singin' ter them lords an' laidies? An' sech vulgar songs as those! Why, Alf, I'm ashaimed of you. You've disgraced yerself an' me as brought you 'ere."

I tried to ixplain 'ow pleased they'd all bin, an' 'ow they'd pressed me ter go on; but she wouldn't believe a word of it. It didn't convince 'er reely even when a page, as 'ad bin lookin' fer me ev'rywhere, knocked at the door with "Laidy Starchley's best thanks to Mr. Jones for his very clever entertainment, and would he please order the carriage for whatever train he desired to catch." And that page 'ad 'ardly got away when up kems another with a messidge that "Mr. Mercer-Smith would be glad to see Mr. Jones in the library when he had changed."

"Well," I says to Eliza, "appariently they're not of a mind ter give us much peace. 'Owever, I'll go and settle Mr. Mercer-Smith, whoever 'e is, and then p'raps, we can get a bit o' talk to ourselves."

When I got up to wot they call the lib'ry there stood the clean-shaven gen'leman as I 'ad seen in the gardin.

"Oh, Mr. Jones," said 'e, "I won't keep you a minute, as I can see you are in a hurry. But I thought I should just like to have a word with you before you left. I don't know, of course, what your present arrangements may be; but are you open to an offer?"

An' wot d'yer think 'is offer was? 'E said thet 'e was wot you call a theatrical agent as ingaged people for the stage; and 'e was so took up with my singin' an' the w'y I talked thet 'e'd give me ten pound a week fer as long as I liked ter go on, if I put meself in 'is 'ands to appear twice nightly at the leadin' music 'alls in London an' the provinces.

Well, yer know, talk like thet, comin' suddin, pritty well took me breath aw'y.

"Don't decide in a great hurry," says

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Mr. Mercer-Smith. "Here's my town address, and you can let me know, when you've thought it over."

So I went back to Eliza with a noo supprise for 'er. And wot with thet, and the other things as 'ad 'eppened, we 'ad so mech ter talk of thet long afore we was 'arf-way threw it, ef thet 'ere kerridge didn't kem round ter taike me to the tr'ine!

Fer meself, mind yer, I'd mech rayther 'ave walked, 'cos Eliza could 'ave gorn along with me. But, as it turned out, it was fortunit as I had the kerridge; for when we got to the station, there on the pletform was a big swell, ragin' an' stormin' in a desperit 'urry to git to Effington Court. 'E jemped into the kerridge as soon as I got out, and when they'd put in his luggage, druv orf double quick.

'E was an 'aughty sort o' man, and used sech langwidge to the porter, thet I guessed as 'e must be someone pertic'ler.

"Who is 'e?" I arst, after 'e'd gorn orf.

"'Im?" says the porter. "Ho, 'e's a perfesh'nal gent jest got in from London—kem as a substitoot for somebody as couldn't git orf. Missed 'is proper tri'ne an' got late, it seems—though thet don't excudge sech langwidge."

"'E'll be late fer 'is tea," I says—'cos, yer see, they was beginnin' to leave the gardin party afore I kem aw'y.

Well, I got back 'ome, and a couple o' days later I called on Mr. Mercer-Smith at 'is orfice, an' we fixed ep the bizness pritty quick.

A chanct o' thet sort don't kem in yer w'y so orfen as ter let you 'esertate abaht it. An' thet's 'ow I kem to move out of Whitechapel into sweller quarters, an' the barrer and business was put ep for sale.

But stop a minute. There's jest two bits o' paiper as I should like you ter look at afore you go.

The first is a letter as kem from Eliza. This is wot she said:

DEAR ALF,

I am very glad to hear as you are doing so well, and think we can be married at once—perticlar as through you I have got to leave here at once. Lady Starchley was very angry when she found out as you was Real and not acting, and she says as she could never think of allowing her other servants "to be contaminated by the influence of a low gel like me as associates with such friends as that exceedingly vulgar young man who disgraced her garden party with such improper songs."

Rayther queer, isn't it, when she'd gorn out of 'er w'y ter thenk me for "sech a clever entertainment?"

The other bit is wot I cut out of the *Daily Sentinel*:

The special attraction at the Globe this week has been the appearance of a new artiste of the first rank, Mr. Alfred Jones, whose clever "coster" impersonations have come as a revelation to those of us who considered that this line had been somewhat overworked and vulgarised. Mr. Jones gives us the old style of songs, and follows the usual custom of interpolating "patter" between his songs—and, indeed, often between his lines. But he does it all with a simplicity and naturalness that render his performance a really artistic production.

Other people have pretended to be costers; Mr. Jones, as long as he is on the stage, is absolutely and entirely the real thing. Songs and allusions that in the hands of an ordinary "impersona or" might easily degenerate into mere vulgarity are in his case part of a real study of the actual being he represents. Whether he is singing of the joys of a typical "Bank 'Ollerd'y," or explaining his relations with Eliza, or throwing in pathetic little pictures of life down "Whitechapil w'y," the note he strikes all through is absolutely true and natural.

If the highest art be to conceal art, Mr. Jones has certainly reached the pinnacle at one bound; and we venture to prophesy that his appearance at the various halls for which he is billed will be the outstanding feature of the coming season.

Thet's me, you see.

✦ ✦ ✦ ✦ ✦ ✦

WILDLY WHEELING.

Once, wobbling down a winding lane,
I saw a wheeler wending;
A wide and wondrous way he went,
To what, or whither tending?
I, wildly whirring down the lane,
Towards this wanton wheeler,
Went wond'ring if this would not be
Well for the cycle dealer.

We wobbled wildly, while we were
Both wending ever nearer;
Which wheeler wobbled wildest there,
Which was the widest steerer,
I will not write; I only know
That after windings wondrous,
Both wheelers wobbled worse and worse,
And met with crashings thund'rous.

Herbert J. Brandon.

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Real Life Romances.

The Editor is Always Pleased to Purchase Real Life Romances, Which must be True, and Five Hundred Words in Length.

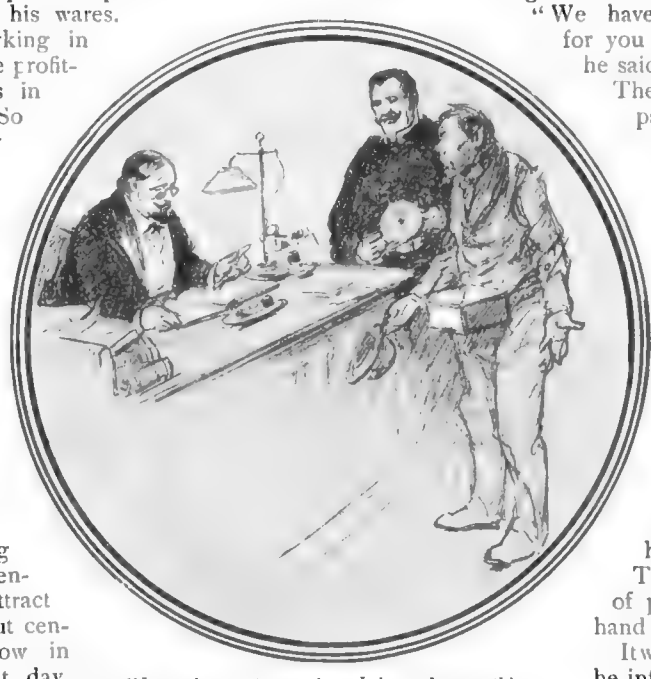
Queer Luck.

THE ROMANCE OF AN ARREST.

DAME FORTUNE recently played a curious trick, and a certain *camelot*, or hawker, of Paris, can bear witness to it. He it was who comprised—well, her victim. For years this *camelot* had stood about the Boulevards of the gay French capital, calling upon the passers-by to purchase his wares. But street hawking in Paris is no more profitable than it is in this country. So for all his daily efforts the poor *camelot* made little more than sufficient to pay his rent and provide himself with meagre fare.

One day, not many months ago, the *camelot* stood outside a theatre plying his trade, and endeavouring to attract customers. But centimes were slow in coming on that day. Then a policeman ordered him to "move on." The *camelot* murmured indignantly, and still waited in the hope that he might yet find a customer. But more misfortune was in store for him than mere slackness of business. The policeman, indignant that the *camelot* had ignored his order, arrested him and led him to the nearest police-station.

The man's heart sank. He knew quite well that he had infringed one of the city by-laws, made, so it appeared to him, to drive such men as he to starvation. But what chance had he to pay even the smallest fine? And visions of a long week in cells rose up disconcertingly in his mind.



"I am innocent, *monsieur*. I have done nothing beyond that of which I am now accused," he cried.

Having arrived at the police-station, the *camelot* was brought before the commissary of police, who at once demanded his name and address. A look of surprise crossed the commissary's face at the man's reply. He glanced at him sharply, and then turned to a ledger at his side.

"We have been looking for you for some time," he said.

The *camelot* turned pale. Was some serious charge about to be brought against him? It must be so!

"I am innocent, *monsieur*. I have done nothing beyond that of which I am now accused," he cried, wringing his hands in despair.

The commissary of police raised his hand for silence.

It was pleasant news, he informed the man, that he had for him. He was not wanted by the police for any crime.

"The fact is," proceeded the commissary, "you are undoubtedly the heir to a respectable fortune. Your uncle died recently leaving you ninety thousand francs, and it was to enable you to inherit your fortune that we were looking for you."

The *camelot* left the police-station as one walking in a dream. The wonderful piece of fortune seemed too good to be real. Yet it must be true, he told himself, for the commissary of police had allowed him to go, and had told him to come back and pay the fine when he received his fortune.

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The Lucky Number.

THE ROMANCE OF A LOTTERY TICKET.

THE beginning of all that is to follow happened on the day that the result of one of the great State lotteries of France was announced. Throughout the whole country hope lingered in many a heart. Even the poor peasant guiding the plough in the field, or feeding cattle in the farmyard, thought of his solitary ticket in the State lottery, and fondly pictured his well-remembered number the winner of fifty thousand francs.

Such is chance. Even this was not impossible. And the little seamstress, with eyes aching from arduous plying of the needle, wondered whether the evening paper would transform her into an heiress. All alike, rich or poor, were at this time full of expectations, but more particularly was a certain young man, who had arranged that a friend should send him a telegram should any of his numbers in the lottery prove successful.

Men whom he scarcely knew now treated him as an old friend and invited him to call.

At noon on the eventful day a telegram arrived at the house of this young man. "You have won a prize of 400,000 francs," he read breathlessly.

Right and left through his native town the news spread, and the young man received innumerable congratulations on his good fortune. The sudden acquisition of riches he found carried with it many surprises. Men whom he scarcely knew now treated him as an old friend and invited him to call.

Still the prospect of the four hundred thousand francs was such that he felt that he could afford to increase his circle of acquaintances. So the "young millionaire" betook himself to the bank and withdrew his savings of several years.

A beggarly sum it now seemed in comparison with the wealth that was his in Paris, and thither he determined to repair. Arrived some hours later at the French capital, he was met by the friend who had informed him of his good fortune. A sumptuous dinner at one of the best restaurants, followed by a box at the theatre, passed the first day pleasantly enough; the next the lucky young winner of the lottery prize decided he and his friend, a bank clerk, should spend, as soon as the latter was free, in motoring.

Thus several days passed, and, what with dinners at the best restaurants and the most expensive seats at the theatre, the young man began to realise that he must very shortly draw upon his newly-acquired fortune. This part of the business he asked his friend, who was naturally well acquainted in matters of banking, to transact. Still a couple of days passed, and no cheque was forthcoming to enable him to obtain the first benefit of his good fortune. When he broached the subject to his friend, the bank clerk demurred and murmured something about delay, or changed the subject.

At last a day came when it was impossible for the young man to wait any longer for his prize. He had scarcely ten francs left of all that he had brought with him from his native town. Then came the disconcerting revelation.

"You have not won the prize," his friend told him with regret. "When I sent you the telegram I honestly thought you had, and when three days ago I discovered that I had made a mistake I had not the courage to tell you."

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Baby Overboard!

THE ROMANCE OF A THRILLING RESCUE.

"SHIP-WRECKED four times I've bin," said the teller of the story, "and the last was about the most excitin' of 'em all. Want to 'ear about it? Right oh!

"My ship was the *Glencairn*, cap'en of her Nicholls by name. 'E'd 'is wife and babby aboard, kid only sixteen months old. We was wrecked off Cape Horn in July; struck the rocks in as 'eavy a gale as ever I've knowed; fog, and snow, and ev'ry luxury, as one might say. Two men drownded in gettin' off the lifeboat. Tried twice, we did, and the second time was successful.

"Mrs. Nicholls and the kid were got in, but the sea was that rough and tempestuous we couldn't land nowheres, and back we come to the wreck agin, and a awful night we spent, I can tell yer, thinking as 'ow she'd break up any minute.

"Next day we'd another try; the boat was launched right enough, and the missis was lowered into 'er. Then the cap'en with the kid in 'is arms went to the stern of the wreck, and we watched breathless-like to see what 'e would do, holdin' the boat with our oars as best we could with them great waves tossin' us about like a shuttlecock.

When the cap'en hol erd agin 'e just chucked that blessed kid acrost the bit of 'eaving water.

"Well, the cap'en shouted somethin' to the mate, who stood in the boat with 'is arms stretched out, and when the cap'en hollered agin 'e just chucked that blessed kid acrost the bit of 'eaving water, and the mate 'e got it all right, and laid it in the bottom of the boat whilst the cap'en came aboard some'ow 'isself.

"That kid didn't care a mite! It just crawled about amongst our legs, as jolly as a sandboy, till its ma got 'old of it. She was in a pretty takin', I can tell yer, when she saw 'er offspring 'urled inter space.

"Well, we got ashore *this* journey, or I shouldn't be 'ere a-tellin' you of this yarn, and the Injuns met us brimmin' over with the milk of 'uman kindness; rigged up a shelter for us, and there we stopped for a bloðmin' week.

"That kid was dressed up in skins, and its mammy carried it pick-a-back, for all the world like them squaws. Then we'd a pretty rough journey 'cross country to a missionary s house, where we'd a good rest, and bime-by we come to Rio Grande, a little matter of sixty mile or so.

"But it 'ud take too long to tell you of the country we passed through, or of our adventures, for we'd a stiffish time afore we got to civilisation. But that babby! Well, there! It just made my 'eart jump into my mouth when I seed 'im thrown overboard! And it was the 'cutest little cuss you ever saw, rigged out in them outlandish skins.

"Ain't it wunnerful what they small critters will live through? Where did we sail from? Puntaa' Arenas, if that 'elps you much, and our ship was the *Crita*, and jolly glad we all was to see them there old Dover cliffs agin. Yes. I've bin four times wrecked, and p'raps I'll be four times more. Who knows?

"The kid's mother she took to all our 'ardships very kind, and stepped out like a good 'un whenever there was any marchin' ter be done. We 'ad a good bit of it altogether, and a good many shocks one way and another, but she came through 'em all smilin'.

"The only thing as upset 'er was w'en the cap'en threw the kid!"

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MR. —HIS PAGES.

When April's here with wayward guiles
It's idle to forget
That though her face is wreathed in smiles,
Her eyes are often wet.
Shy couples who to woods adjourn
'Neath skies serenely blue,
Too frequently, alas, return
Drenched through and through and through.

They do not heed the chilly stream
Which trickles down their necks,
Who gaily read, with eyes agleam,
The words of "Mr. X";
Bring April in with shouts of glee,
And if depressed by rain.
Just turn to "Mr. X," for he
Will cheer you up again.

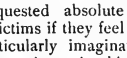
Puzzle Penknives, Puzzle Purses, or Packs of ROYAL Playing Cards, will be given as prizes to readers who forward new puzzles, problems, or other tricks which are inserted in this feature. All readers communicating with "Mr. X" and wishing for a reply must inclose a stamped, addressed envelope. Letters should be addressed to "Mr. X" (care of THE ROYAL MAGAZINE), 18 Henrietta Street, London, W.C.

An Electric Shock.

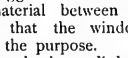
It is often possible to brighten up a dull gathering by offering to give an electric shock to two people, solely by the aid of "personal magnetism" and "concentration of will-force." To perform this imposing feat, ask the chosen two to link their little fingers together, while you grasp their disengaged hands. Stand quietly thus for a short time, having previously requested absolute silence, and then ask the victims if they feel the shock.

Unless particularly imaginative they will reply in the negative. At this stage of the proceedings suggest that the two have some connecting material between their fingers, and propose that the window shall be employed for the purpose.

Now make each place a little finger on the glass, and when asking if they feel the "pane," look out for a shock yourself.



Q. What is the difference between a donkey and a pair of gloves?
A. One you are and the other you wear (were).



Touching Forbearance.

HAWKINS: "There was an amusing affair in connection with Green's dog the other day."

DAWKINS: "Do tell me about it."

HAWKINS: "Why, the animal took a violent dislike to the chief magistrate, and bit him."

DAWKINS: "I suppose he immediately made an order for its destruction?"

HAWKINS: "Oh, no; he merely bound it over to keep the piece (peace)."

Q. Why are barristers among the most religious people?
A. Because they attend to both the law and the profits (prophets).

Another Bill.

A few months ago "Mr. X" published a curious bill sent in by an old carpenter. One of his readers, wishing to go one better, sends him the following gem:

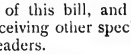
An old countryman sent in his account to the squire for horse hire, and it read thus:

	s.	d.
Osforada	7	6
Afortheos	1	0
Agetinofimomeagin	1	6
	10	0

The squire puzzled over it for some time, but finally made it out to mean:

	s.	d.
Horse for a day	7	6
Hay for the horse	1	0
A-getting of him home again .	1	6
	10	0

"Mr. X" would scorn to question the genuineness of this bill, and looks forward eagerly to receiving other specimens from his thoughtful readers.



Q. Why was the Pharisee glad?
A. Because he was not Sadducee! (sad you see).

[ED. ROYAL: "*Is that a joke?*"
"MR. X" (hurt): "*Most people would think so.*"
ED. ROYAL: "*Oh!*"]

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What He Was.

"Once," said Peters reminiscently, "I knew a man who was born in mid-ocean. His father was an Englishman and his mother was of French-German parentage, but was a native of Greece. Now what would you say that man was?"

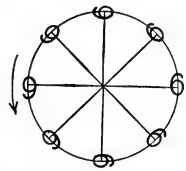
Stevens thought hard for a few moments, but eventually gave it up.

"As a matter of fact," explained Peters kindly, "he was a wholesale ironmonger."

The Mysterious Figure Nine.

In the November number of The Royal Magazine "Mr. X" published a few interesting peculiarities concerning the figure nine.

A Canadian admirer with a turn for higher mathematics that "Mr. X" envies, now forwards him a brilliant discovery by which the figure nine may be made to solve the hitherto insoluble problem of perpetual motion. "Mr. X" feels he cannot do better than quote the words of his learned correspondent.



"Take," he writes, "a well-balanced wheel and nail to its circumference (as in the illustration) nines with their backs to the centre of the wheel, all heading the same way. Give the wheel a start in the direction shown by the arrow, and it ought to go for ever, because as they descend the 'nines' are bound to be transformed into 'sixes,' which, being less and consequently lighter than nines, naturally ascend, to be reformed into nines when they get over the top. I do not know," adds "Mr. X's" correspondent modestly, "whether all our searchers after the solution of the elusive problem of perpetual motion know that it may be solved in the manner I have described."

"Mr. X" is indeed proud to be associated, in however small a degree, with this great scientific discovery.

THE REASON.

"The letter A," said William, with a chuckle,
And a twinkle in his eye,
"The letter A is like the honeysuckle;
Now can you tell me why?"
"No," answered Mary, "much as I endeavour,
The point I cannot see."
"Because," said William, always bright and clever,
"It's followed by a B!"

Remarkable Acquaintances.

Gibbs: "I once knew a man who was turned into wood."

Dibbs: "Impossible!"

Gibbs: "Not at all. He was taken on to a vessel, and naturally he was then aboard."

Dibbs: "That's frightfully old! But I knew a girl who was dumb for twenty years, strange as it may seem, and gained speech in a minute."

Gibbs: "How did she manage that?"

Dibbs: "On going into a cycle shop with a friend one day she suddenly picked up a wheel and spoke!"

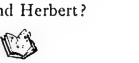
How Old are They?

"There go James and Herbert Brown," observed Winifred admiringly. "What a handsome pair they look, to be sure, and yet quite young. I wonder how old they are?"

"Well," answered her sister Ethel, "curiously enough, ten years ago the combined ages of James and Herbert were one-third the age of old Mr. Brown; at present, one of them is two years older than the other, and their combined ages are fourteen years less than their father's age."

"Oh, I see," replied Winifred, working out the sum in her head, for she was a clever girl, "thank you for putting the matter in a nut-shell."

How old were James and Herbert?



When?

Black: "Can you tell me the answer to this, White: When is an apple pie?"

White: "When is an apple pie what?"

Black: "No, not 'when is an apple pie *what*,' when is an apple pie?"

White: "My dear chap, are you going off your head?"

Black: "Not at all. An apple is pie when it is all covered in with crust and sugar and things, and put in a dish."

(White's eyes assume a glassy stare, and he goes away waving his arms in dumb agony.)

ANSWER.

How Old are They? 17 and 15.

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Mr. George Dunlop.

No. XXXIX.—THE ABYSSINIAN WAR: THE STORMING OF MAGDALA.

From the Narrative of Mr. George Dunlop (Late 4th Hussars).

As Told to Walter Wood.

The Abyssinian War of 1867-68 was remarkable for its extraordinarily heavy cost, and the astonishing mortality amongst the vast number of animals engaged. The war was undertaken to release some British captives and to punish King Theodore for refusing to set them free at the demand of the British Government. The campaign lasted only a few months, yet from first to last it cost the nation nearly nine million pounds. Much money was wasted, owing to urgency and a wide authority. The narrator of this story was originally in the Sappers and Miners, afterwards in the 4th Hussars, and later served in the Royal Marine Artillery. In Abyssinia he was specially detailed for signalling and kindred duties, so that he had particularly good opportunities of seeing many aspects of the campaign.

If you expect me to tell a tale that reminds you of the Chicago stockyards—and I know them well, because I have worked in them—you will be disappointed. Nor must you imagine that you are going to listen to a recital of marvellous deeds with sword and carbine. But if you want a story of amazing marches in a land of hills and lions, snakes, scorpions, centipedes, and every filthy thing that creeps and crawls, of terrible sufferings by baggage animals of all sorts, of floggings of British soldiers for small offences, and of a triumphant victory at the end, and in spite of all, then I can give you the framework for one. It is for you to do the rest of the building.

Theodore, who ruled things in that dark country, was a cruel tyrant, and one of his performances was to keep in chains and in prison a number of British subjects. Now, Great Britain does not allow that sort of thing to be done with her people, and the Emperor was plainly told that the captives must be set free. He refused to listen; he was defiant, and all the more so because he lived in an amazingly strong place in the hills called Magdala, four hundred miles from the coast. His Majesty had good reason for deluding himself into the belief that he could not be touched or punished by a British army, even if England sent an expedition out against him. He was to learn by experience what a bitter mistake he had made. He flouted the demands of our Government, and accordingly we set to work to teach him manners. It was one of the costliest lessons ever taught by England.

India was the nearest and best place to get troops from who were needed for work in a hot, hard country, and from India we sailed to Annesley Bay, which is on the shore of the Red Sea.

Abyssinia is a land of mountains, some of which rise to a height of 15,000 feet. In the centre of the country, perched on an enormous, lonely precipice, is Magdala; and it was there that the Emperor calmly awaited our coming—calmly, for the very good reason that he did not suppose we should ever reach him. But when a British army in the old days—I am talking now of forty years ago—set out for a certain place, it got there, particularly when it was commanded by such an old-school soldier as Sir Robert Napier, who afterwards became Lord Napier of Magdala.

We had a wonderful transport service;

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legions, as it seemed, of elephants, camels, mules, ponies, donkeys, and bullocks—half-a-hundred elephants, more than seven thousand camels, thirteen thousand mules and ponies, nearly a thousand donkeys, and over seven thousand bullocks—not far short of thirty thousand animals all told; not to mention thirteen thousand sheep for use as food.

Imagine what it meant to give all these animals food and drink in a barren country where water was only to be got by sinking wells. Lucky were the brutes that were drowned, as many were, in the heavy surf through which we had to force a landing on the coast. It was all the troops could do to get ashore; as for the animals, they were thrown overboard and had to swim for it. The best swimmers of all were the elephants; they were too "fly" to get into trouble, and all landed safely. I have often seen them in India take to the water rather than use the pontoon bridges.

I had had some pretty tough marches in India, but they were child's play to this work of toiling through a mountainous country, at a crawling pace, from the coast to the interior. Some days we could not do more than seven miles, and we started early at that. For every drop of water we had to bore, to make wells; and for this purpose we had with us some American boring apparatus which answered very well. But what are you to do with so vast a number of animals which need so much water?—to say nothing of the European and Indian troops and followers, human beings who must be kept alive at any cost, so that the fighting can be done. Animals perished on every march, and from start to finish of the expedition our track was marked by their decaying bodies or their bleaching skeletons. The air was rank with the smell of them.

As we advanced the enemy skedaddled; we scarcely ever saw them; we seldom seemed to know where they were. We wanted so badly to come into touch with them and to have a fight—anything to relieve the hardship and monotony of the marching by day under a fierce sun and the strain and irritation of our camping at night. We were ceaselessly on the alert, and anything like refreshing sleep was impossible.

I had seen something of snakes and reptiles in India, and thought I understood what it meant to have to deal with them—cobras and the rest of such deadly creatures—but I had a vast deal to learn in Abyssinia. Snakes of all sorts, almost without exception very deadly; scorpions, centipedes, lions, and many other four-footed brutes, had to be contended with, especially at night. Wild beasts carried off numbers of our people, mostly natives, and poisonous reptiles added to the total of our casualties.

The campaign was nothing but suffering and hardship, with plenty of discipline thrown in to flavour it. For ourselves, we were on ship's rations—and ship's rations forty years ago were most appetising when they were taken on trust. I remember, though, that we had Australian mutton, tinned, and very good stuff it was.

The advance was not exhilarating. Men were dying of fever, animals of all sorts were perishing of thirst and hunger, and pitiful it was to see them die, knowing that we could not do anything to save them. At the end of the campaign very few of them were left alive.

Skirmishes we had, it is true; but we wanted something more thrilling than that; we longed for a fight, so that we could get our work done and clear out of the country. Variation on the day's work of heavy labour we got certainly, but it was of the kind that one would rather not become acquainted with, because it consisted of terrible punishment for offences which in these days are treated very lightly.

Our Commander-in-Chief was a stern soldier of those earlier days when men were considered simply as fighting machines, and when the private was looked upon as being something that was scarcely to be accounted human. If a soldier went wrong, however trivially, he had to undergo the punishment of the lash, and in Abyssinia there were many cases of the infliction of the cat. Discipline had to be maintained, and that was a favourite way of keeping it up—a survival of the system of the Iron Duke.

A man named Coleman tried to get at the rum, which was under guard. Some men will do anything to quench their thirst, especially when the slaking liquid is alcohol, and this was the case with us, although it was known that judgment would be swift and heavy. Coleman was caught, and sentenced to fifty lashes by a court-martial, sanctioned by Sir Robert—there was none of the chocolate or feather-bed soldier about him, and I do not believe that flogging in the Army would have been abolished if the matter had rested with him.

Flogging was inflicted in the cavalry by farriers, and in the infantry by drummers, and in the case of Coleman two drummers were told off to do the disagreeable work.

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The troops were paraded, and the culprit was fastened to a wheel of the treasury-chest, which was always under guard. The treasury-chest was exactly like a gun-carriage, except that where the ammunition-boxes should have been the money-boxes were placed.

The drummers plied the lash, and we were forced to look upon the degrading and terrible ceremony. I may be wrong in my recollection, but I feel pretty certain that although he had been primed for the performance Coleman did not take it very well. Perhaps the exhilaration had evaporated too quickly.

We had reached Annesley Bay on January 4th, 1868, and on April 2nd we had got as far as Magdala, ready to storm and take the place. Meanwhile Theodore had come to his senses to the extent of setting the British captives free; but, as a set-off, he had massacred three hundred native prisoners. Some of his troops had mutinied, too, so that he was not in anything like an enviable situation. But he was plucky—let that be remembered in his favour. He stuck to his city and his people long after the time when he knew that all was lost, and could have saved himself by flight.

Any properly constituted man has a peculiar pleasure in feeling that a given piece of work is done, and I know that I rejoiced when I knew that that appalling march to the black monarch's capital was finished, and that at last there was to be some real, good, hard fighting.

As we advanced the natives had fled, and had given us a very poor show for our money; but here in the mountain fastness they were standing at bay, believing, I am certain, that we should never have the audacity to attack them, and that if by any chance we were so foolish we should be hurled back with enormous losses. The Abyssinians, remember, are good fighting people when it really comes to a crisis, and they were completely cornered now. They had to make their choice between abandoning their capital and all its treasures and driving us away or destroying us; and they took the latter chance.

As a signaller I was with the advance body, and reached the fortress the night before the main body arrived. The signallers took up a position on the outskirts of the city, and throughout the night which preceded the assault I was restless with excitement, like a man who goes to see a thrilling play.

It was wonderful, when day had broken and the attack was being formed, to see the eagerness and courage of our people—men like the old Thirty-third, now the West Riding Regiment, and the Forty-second, the Black Watch. And the odds seemed so hopelessly against the assailants; it seemed so impossible for any troops, however desperate, however valiant, to storm and capture such a stronghold.

It was a hill perched on hills, a fortress almost in the clouds, to which there was admission by one gate only, and that gate so well defended that, with resolute troops behind it, there was only the most shadowy hope of successful storming. First there was the gate to reach, by scrambling and climbing; then barriers made of thorns and boughs and stones—anything and everything that came handy—to break away, and then the gate to burst in before our soldiers could force an entrance.

The actual place which was to be stormed and taken, the central object to be gained, was an oval-shaped platform, about a mile and a half long and three-quarters of a mile wide, rising something like five hundred feet above a surrounding plateau, and approachable, as I have said, only by one way. First of all there was to be a bombardment, and when the big guns, which had been brought up by the elephants, had paved the way, the British and native troops were to hurry to the assault.

It was Easter Monday morning when the drums and bugles sounded in the hills and the stormers sprang to arms. Rain began to fall, but nothing could depress the spirits of the men, who were now as keen to seize the city and bring away the prisoners as a tigress is to get her prey.

The big guns boomed and crashed, making a wonderful echo in the mountains, and by way of answer came the little spits of fire from the hilltop, which told of men who held their ground and challenged us to come on. Lucky it was for us that they did not know how to use the artillery they possessed, because a single well-served gun could pretty well have destroyed us.

For fully two hours the artillery hammered at the defences, then the booming ceased, and a strange silence fell upon the fortress, in which the musketry had been overpowered. It was literally the calm before the storm, for the Thirty-third, the Forty-second, and other troops were forming for the assault, to deliver the last and biggest blow of the campaign.

Suddenly, as I watched, I heard the sounds of cheering, and saw the waving of colours as

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Forcing their way through a barricade of thorns, they hurled themselves upon the nearest of the Abyssinians.

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the storming-parties began their advance. They rushed on to the final attack, and forced themselves very near to the last of the defences, almost to the gate of Magdala itself.

Whatever his faults were—and they were many—Theodore was at least a brave man. He must have known by this time that the fortune of war was against him, and that he was doomed; but instead of bolting he encouraged his people, and personally directed the defence of the gate. He saw the British troops approaching, regardless of the fire which was poured upon them; advancing up those steep rocky slopes which had been reckoned unclimbable.

There was, indeed, something here to strive for, and the men of the Thirty-third and the Black Watch knew it. So far, no white soldier had ever set foot in Magdala, and there was a noble struggle to be first within the place.

It was a marvellous sight to see them forcing their way up the hill to the fortress, and made the more impressive because, just at the most stirring stage of the assault, heavy rain began to fall, the lightning to flash, and the thunder to bellow—and it bellowed indeed in that land of mountains when it began to play its tune at all.

Who would be the first within the fortress? Whose colour would be the first to float in token of victory? By whose hand would the king be slain or taken—the monarch for whose body, dead or living, a big reward was offered?

I daresay some such questions had passed through the brains of the men who were struggling and panting up the slopes of Magdala, rushing for the gate and barricades behind which Theodore and his faithful remnant were at bay.

There were amongst the very foremost of the stormers two young soldiers of the Thirty-third named Michael Magner, a drummer, and James Bergin, a private. They were rushing on, separated only by a few paces, towards the very top of the defences, into the thickest of the fight and the deadliest of the danger. They had tried to reach a particular gateway and had failed; but they climbed up a cliff, and forcing their way through a barricade of thorns, they hurled themselves upon the nearest of the Abyssinians, and in a fierce hand-to-hand encounter either slew or scattered them. Then they struggled into Magdala itself, the first of all the stormers to enter the fastness of the king.

Redcoats streamed in after them, and as if to emphasise the splendour of the victory, the sun burst out from behind the dark clouds and shone on the triumphant troops and reddened steel. If this was not one of those daring deeds which are so often done in time of battle for salvation of human life, it was at any rate an act of such especial bravery that the Commander-in-Chief recommended the two heroes for the Victoria Cross, and each received it. These were the only crosses given for the whole of the campaign.

When the troops were pouring in to Magdala, furious because of what they had seen and heard of the cruelty of the king—that very morning more than three hundred mutilated corpses, fettered, had been seen at the foot of one of the precipices—a solitary figure was observed near a stack of dried grass. In his hand was a revolver, and, as a rush was made towards him, the weapon, pointed at himself, was fired, and the man fell to the ground, mortally hurt and at the point of death.

They drew him more into the open, and then the startled report went round that this very man, now dead, was the king himself. He had committed suicide—with a pistol presented to him by Queen Victoria in 1854—rather than fall into the hands of those conquerors from whom he had no right to expect mercy, and from whom in all probability he would have got short shrift.

There was a fluttering of silk regimental Colours, the waving of helmets, and the roaring of triumphant British cheers. The sounds of victory rang down the hill and travelled along the plateau for a distance of two miles or so, until all the force was made aware that Magdala had fallen. Then a chorus of joyful sounds was heard, and the hills re-echoed "God Save the Queen," which the bands struck up—bands which not so long before had played the troops to the beginning of the storming with stirring tunes like "Cheer, boys, cheer," and "Garry Owen."

Few of us who went into Magdala failed to see the body of the man who had defied us, who called himself not only King of Abyssinia, but also Lord of the Earth, King of Kings, Saviour of Jerusalem, and I know not what else. We had no pity for him, but this I do know—there were few indeed of us who did not in our hearts admire the man who had made a gallant stand at the end and was not afraid to die.

The main thing that enters a soldier's mind when he gets into such a place as this is the desire to loot, and most of us went in search

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In his hand was a revolver, and, as a rush was made towards him, the weapon, pointed at himself, was fired, and the man fell to the ground.

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of spoil. Most of us were disappointed, too. There were many extraordinary articles and ornaments, but very few were of real value, not by any means the precious metals that we had expected to find.

The palace of the king itself—if you can call a two-storeyed thatched barn a palace—was disappointing, and as for the huts, the general buildings, you might as reasonably expect to find riches in an East End slum as there. Many things that looked like gold—they glittered bravely enough—were merely gilt; but there was a mitre of pure gold which weighed several pounds, and three or four royal crowns.

I was either lazier or less greedy than my comrades, because nothing in the way of loot came into my possession—not even a bit of the blood-stained clothing of the king, for which there was such a struggle that when he was finally left he was naked.

I was curious to set eyes on the prisoners for whom we had suffered so many hardships, and I was amazed to find that there were so few of them, and that they were by no means all our own countrymen. Perhaps it was because they were so excited through their freedom, perhaps it was because they were merely human, or it may have been that they wanted an early chance of getting level with their gaolers; I do not know what the motive was, but a few of them at any rate were very active when it came to laying hands on loot.

Next day the king was buried in a church with scant ceremony, and then it became a question only of crowning our work of vengeance. That took some time—three more days—during which we prepared the city for destruction by fire. That in itself was no very hard task, seeing that the three thousand houses or so which formed it were slightly built, with straw roofs. and that enormous quantities of very inflammable articles were strewn about the alleys which served as streets.

Every living creature having been forced to go, the Engineers blew up the towers, defences, and magazines; then torches were placed against the huts, and very soon, fanned by a strengthening breeze, the city was a blazing mass.

Awed, and with something like a feeling of compassion, I watched the growing fire, a mass of flame and smoke on the summit of that frowning hill. By nightfall what had been the city of a monarch was a smouldering furnace—the funeral pyre of the man who had claimed to be the King of Kings.

It had been a terrible country to get into, and it was almost as bad to leave. Yet there was always the cheerful knowledge that we were on our way back to the coast and India, which was a land of comfort compared with Abyssinia. We had, as our Commander-in-Chief told us in General Orders, succeeded in our task. We had marched over four hundred miles of mountainous country, and had stormed Magdala and burnt it so that it remained only a scorched rock. We had also got something in the way of prize-money from the sale of plunder, but very little.

Before we reached the coast our victorious army endured what was, I think, the most appalling thunderstorm I ever saw. The very skies seemed to burst to let the water down, and the thunder and lightning were terrific. Men and animals were drowned in torrents that subsided as swiftly as they had been created. I really think there were those amongst us who would far more readily have stormed Magdala afresh than go through such another performance of Nature.

We had released the captives and brought them away with us. I did not know how much a head they had cost the country, or I daresay I should have looked at them with deeper curiosity. They were certainly the costliest prisoners that were ever liberated, for there was only a handful of them, all told, and from first to last, to set them free cost England nearly nine million golden sovereigns.

AN AFTERNOON CALL.

A cup of tea, a scrap of toast (no more),
A little chat about the last new book,
And then (of course, she saw him to the door)
His leave he took!

I know my fancies may be quite misplaced,
I was not there—and so I could not look—
But it occurs to me 'twas from her waist
His sleeve he took!

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The Mouse

By Owen Oliver.

A Story of How the "Dull Sister" was Made Happy.

People always said that I was a quiet girl, and my half-sisters called me Mother Mouse. They did not mean it in the least unkindly, for they were very fond of me.

I do not think I was so very quiet naturally. I was not shy, and I thought of plenty of things to say, and sometimes I wrote them in my diary afterwards; but I did not say them unless it was really necessary. Nobody wants to hear girls talk nonsense unless they are pretty, and I was not; and that was the reason that I was a quiet girl.

The people who called me "quiet" and "sensible" would have been surprised if they had known how anxiously I studied my looks in the glass when I was eighteen or nineteen. I tried to be fair to myself, and I decided that I was not actually ugly, and that it would be ill-natured to call me such a nasty word as "plain," especially when I had a little colour. I was simply "not good-looking." So I decided not to make the mistake of thinking that men who were polite to me meant anything, but to be content to become a pleasant old maid, and to speak when I was spoken to. I see now that this was only a disagreeable kind of vanity; but it is the truth.

There was another reason why I was quiet. I could not spare very much time from my household duties; and I wanted what I *could* spare for music. So I did not go out a great deal. I had to manage the house just after I was seventeen. My stepmother died then, and my heart was almost broken. I always felt as if I were her own child. I suppose that was wrong; but she was the only mother whom I remembered, and no words could tell what a sweet mother she was to me; a mother and a sister and a friend, all in one. If she had lived she would not have let me grow into my foolish quietness. I know just what she would have said.

"If you don't think you are attractive enough—but *I* do—the remedy is to be more attractive, not less!" Oh, how I missed her!

"We've loved each other very much, Nan," she said at the last. "I know you, and I am not afraid for Babs and Molly, only for my Nan. You mustn't sacrifice your young life and become a drudge for them. Remember that it isn't good for children to be brought up on sacrifice. It makes them selfish. It isn't even good for them to be mothered too much. We have to grow our own characters, Nan. Don't do every little thing for them. Teach them to do for themselves; but keep your influence over them. You, and no one else, will influence them as I should have done. Kiss me for true, Nan."

She always made us promise like that, and we never broke a promise to mother. I kissed her and promised then. So I always felt that it depended on me whether the girls grew up good women. Perhaps that was another reason why I felt old and serious.

They were lovely children, and they grew up very beautiful. They were as bright and amusing as they were pretty, and people admired them and petted them so much, that they would have been spoilt if they had not been such sterling good girls at heart. They were impetuous and full of mischief, but they were honourable and kind, and they could not have done anything mean if they had tried. I was very pleased with them, and very proud that they were so much admired. I did wish that they were not quite so fond of

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flirting, and had not begun so young; but I thought that I should have done the same at their age if I had been pretty and lively. So I did not blame them, but looked out very carefully that they only knew really nice boys, and I encouraged them to give some of their time to useful things; and especially to music.

They had nice voices, and I persuaded father to let them go on with singing lessons after they left school. We practised a great deal. It improved my own singing, too, because they insisted that I should not do nothing but accompany, and they liked me to show them how their songs ought to go. My voice is not very good. It is too husky; and I could not sing at concerts as they did. But I knew how I *wanted* to sing, and they were very fond of hearing me.

"Oh, Mousie!" Babs used to say, "you are the *nicest* singer." And if I shook my head Molly would seize it, and nod it forcibly. She was as strong as a young lion.

"Your modesty is all pretend," she teased one day. "You think in your naughty heart that you're clever, and nice, and lovely, and the most wonderful player and singer that ever was; and you're as vain as vain can be, you artful Mother Mouse."

Babs watched my struggles—it was no use struggling with that big, wild Molly—and laughed.

"She's so vain that she won't even trouble to adorn herself!" she declared. "We won't put up with it, Moll. We'll make her adorn, like we have to!"

I believe it was a kind of plot to induce me to make the best of myself. Anyhow, after that they worried me into having smarter dresses and hats, and did my hair for me, and put flowers in it. They had a natural taste for dress; and they certainly made my lack of looks less obvious. Father abetted them, and I am afraid that, in my heart, I liked it.

"It's the punishment for being too good," Molly told me; "and there's worse to come if you sit with your mouth shut in company. I shall say the most *awful* things, and tell them 'that's what my beautiful sister says!'"

"They'll think you mean Babs," I declared.

"No fear! Babs never said anything wise in her life, did you, old stupid?"

They always addressed each other like that; but they were devotedly attached, really.

"Oh, I hope not!" Babs clasped her hands tragically. "Except by comparison with *you*, silly-billy!" Then they both roared with laughter. They were always so merry. It was not strange that everyone liked them.

When they were nearly nineteen and eighteen (and I was five-and-twenty) several young fellows began to pay them more obvious attentions, and I grew very anxious, for fear that they should slip into an engagement too light-heartedly. It seemed to me that Frank Carter would make just the right husband for Babs; but his father had heavy losses, and Frank went away to South Africa, and Babs didn't seem to care, except in a sisterly way, though in that way she was very nice to him and tried to cheer him up, and even worked him a pair of slippers, though she hated fancy work.

I had hoped, too, that Tom Briant and Molly's boy and girl affair would come to something; but they seemed quite content to tease and flirt. They flirted more than I liked. I was almost sure that he kissed her down the garden one evening. I should have spoken to her severely, only I recollected that a boy once stole a kiss when he saw me home from a party; and I did not remember that I felt so very, very angry. It was before I had quite made up my mind to be an old maid.

So I thought perhaps it didn't matter so very much, if they did not take it too seriously; but I kept a close watch on Molly. She was always the wilder; and Babs had grown a good deal more discreet lately.

Towards the end of that summer, however, I saw symptoms of something more serious than a boy and girl affair. Lord Eversby came to stay with the Grants, where the girls went very often, and he took a great deal of notice of them. They were extraordinarily taken with him, though he was a dozen years older—just over thirty—and became "chums," as they called it. He was a tall, muscular, bronzed man, and as strong in character as in body. He had been exploring and shooting in Africa, and he was full of stories. When they were funny he never moved a muscle, but his eyes twinkled. He was very likeable. He came to our house almost every day to see "the babies," as he called them. He was very kind to me, too, and never let me feel that he did not come to see me, too; and I talked more to him than I did to most people. One afternoon he came when they were out; and instead of rushing off, as their other admirers would have done, he stayed for quite a long time, and persuaded me to sing.

"The babies tell me that there is no singing like yours," he said.

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"I love my songs," I owned, "and I try my hardest with my poor voice. It is husky. I think you will try to overlook that, like 'the babies' do; and so—I do not usually sing to people, but I will sing to you, Lord Eversby."

I sat down and sang "She is Far from the Land," and "Rose Softly Blooming." Then he asked for Wagner, and I smiled—I am always pleased when anyone thinks I am worthy to sing Wagner—and sang Elizabeth's intercession for Tannhäuser, and her prayer. And then he came and put a MS. piece that he had found upon the piano, and begged me to sing that.

"It is your own," he said, "isn't it?"

"Oh, no!" I told him. "It is stolen." I played a little piece of the accompaniment on the piano and smiled at him.

"Wagner!" he cried. "But——?"

"I found the words in a magazine," I explained, "and I wanted to sing them, so I put them to this. I adapted it a little. I thought Wagner would forgive me because I love his music so, and I can't help putting words to it."

Then I sang.

"It's the punishment for being too good," Molly told me; "and there's worse to come."

A HEART.

You do not know the thoughts I think in silence—
  You who have found me only dull and cold.
You do not know, who deem my soul so empty,
  The burning words my lips can scarce withhold.

You do not know my hand's desire to clasp you,
  My eyes' desire to look and look on you!
You do not know my heart's desire to shield you—
  How I would smile to feel the sword go through!

When you shall know—I have a curious fancy
  That those we love at Heaven's bar are named—
Give me no pity, but, for God's dear mercy,
  Smile on me once, and let me go unshamed.

He did not speak when I finished; and I sat playing little snatches on the piano for some time. I cannot sing a song like that without entering into it; and I felt as if I wanted a few minutes to come back to my quiet self.

"You sang that wonderfully," he said at last. "And yet perhaps it was not so wonderful. I think you are like the girl in the song."

He always spoke of me as a "girl," not a "woman," as most people did. That was one of the reasons that I felt my real self with him.

"Oh, no!" I said, "I am not romantic. Or, if I am, it is only for 'the babies.' *They* ought to have romances. They are so beautiful."

"Yes," he agreed. "They are very beautiful. What dear 'babies' they are!" He smiled. "But there is more in their pretty heads than people give them credit for, and more appreciation of their big sister, who is half their size. They are very anxious that other people should appreciate her, too. Do you know—don't betray me—they told me to make you sing that song."

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"Oh!" I blushed a little. "They think too much of my singing."

"They think much of it; but it wasn't quite that. They said—'they' is correct, because they were so enthusiastic that they both talked at once—'Mother Mouse isn't a mouse at all, really. She only makes out that she is. It's a pattern for us, we expect!' I couldn't help laughing at that. They added that 'She can't pretend when she sings. You make her sing "A Heart" to you. Then you'll hear the real Nan.' I'm glad that I've heard, Miss Nan, and I want to be friends with—the real Nan!"

"I don't admit that I am such a sentimental person," I said; "but I am pleased to be friends; very pleased, Lord Eversby."

After that he paid me so much attention that I was quite sure that he was in love with one of the girls, but I was utterly puzzled which it was. I could not make out whether either was in love with him, and sometimes I was afraid that both might be, for they certainly were delighted to meet him, and they were always praising him to me. I was so alarmed at the idea that I spoke to father about it, but he only laughed.

"But it's a very serious thing, daddy," I protested. "He wouldn't come here so constantly if he did not mean something. He is not that sort of man. What do you think, *really?*"

"I think he is going to marry one of my charming daughters," father said.

"But suppose she doesn't accept him?" I said.

"She will," father declared.

"Oh—h!" I said. "You know which it is?"

"Of course I do! You're as blind as a bat, Mother Mouse."

"Which, daddy?" I asked eagerly.

"The one he pays all his attentions to!" father told me, and then he laughed and went off gardening. I followed him and teased him to tell me, but he wouldn't. I had only to notice and I should see for myself, he declared.

I watched most carefully, but I could not see that he treated one differently from the other. If he gave Babs sweets, or flowers, or theatre tickets, or books or music, he gave them to Molly, too. Indeed, he always gave me some as well. And if he took Molly motoring one day, he took Babs the next, and he took me with both of them.

I did not like to speak to them about it for fear of putting wrong ideas into their heads; but I thought it was not quite right of him not to make his intentions more clear. So I talked a great deal to him myself, and kept him away from them as much as I could. They called me "a greedy old pig of a Mouse" to steal their "nice, big, ugly man"—they always said silly things like that—but they seemed more pleased that he was kind to me than annoyed about it. So I began to think that neither was in love, and then I felt very sorry for him, and I thought it a great pity, because I considered him the best man I had ever known, and I believed that he would be an ideal husband.

One morning I was walking down the High Street with Mrs. Green, the vicar's wife, and he stopped and talked, and when we were going he touched my arm and whispered.

"Will you be in this afternoon, Nan?" he asked. (He had dropped the "Miss" lately.) "I am going away soon, and I want to ask you something very important."

"I will stay in," I promised.

"And send the babies out? Just for half-an-hour? I want to speak to you alone."

"If you'll come at half-past three," I promised. "They will insist on coming in to tea at four. They are hungry babies!"

"Half-past three," he said. "It is *very* important to me, Nan. You won't fail me?"

"Of course not," I said. "I've promised!"

I hoped it was Babs he was going to ask about, because Molly was so young and wild; but whichever it was I did not know what to say. So after lunch I took them into father's study, and sat down with an arm round each, and spoke to them very seriously.

"Girls," I said, "you are getting dreadfully grown up now. I don't know if it has occurred to you that somebody might—might propose to you?"

They actually laughed—laughed right out loud, as if it were a good joke.

"The possibility has occurred to us," Babs said solemnly, and then they laughed again as if they would never leave off.

"It isn't quite a laughing matter, dears," I reminded them. "I didn't want you to be taken by surprise."

"Babs has had the subject under consideration since she was six," Molly assured me.

"Since Tom first proposed to Molly," Babs explained. "I think that was the first time; wasn't it, reprehensible one?"

"I forget," said Molly; "but I know that I've accepted him three times and refused him three times, and the seventh is to be

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final. That's why he hangs back. Mean old thing!"

"My dears," I said decidedly, "don't talk any more nonsense. Lord Eversby is coming to see me this afternoon to—well, I have every reason to suppose that it is to speak to me about one of you."

"Lord Eversby!" Babs cried.

"One of *us!*" Molly almost screamed.

"Yes, dears," I said, "one of you, and I don't know which. I thought that perhaps you——"

"It is monstrous!" Babs cried. She seemed quite angry.

"Worse than monstrous!" Molly cried. "I—I *hate* him!"

"So do I!" Babs declared. They seemed in quite a passion and went red, and held each other's arms, as if for protection.

"You have no right to speak of him like that," I said, "no right at all." I was really angry with them. "He is the best man I have ever known, and you should feel highly honoured—one of you, at least. You *don't* care for him, either of you?"

They shook their heads, and suddenly Molly kissed me.

"It's—Tom," she said, and ran out of the room, and Babs hugged me and kissed me, too.

"Couldn't you *see*, dear?" she said. "There was never anyone but Tom for her, really. He is going to speak to father as soon as he gets the partnership. And as for me—when Frank's father lost his money, and Frank went away, he asked me to wait just a year, and I—I said I would wait all time and all eternity. And I *will!*"

And then she ran out, too.

I cried a little. It seemed so good to know that my dear girls had true hearts like that; but I was very sad about Lord Eversby. I had never liked and esteemed anyone so greatly. I was a little sad about myself, too, because I had never been able to get quite rid of a hope that some day someone would care for me and I should care for him; and they were so young, and I was five-and-twenty, and no one had ever wanted me—at least, no one that I cared for in that way. There had been two who might have asked me, if I had encouraged them, but I was very careful not to. I was very worried about what I should do to avoid any unnecessary suffering to Lord Eversby. I decided that the best way was to forestall his question. I would begin talking very quickly and would not let him get a word in, and I would mention in a careless, accidental sort of way that "the babies" were engaged,

"I love you most dearly, Nan," he said. "Will you be my wife?"

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"in a foolish boy and girl fashion, you know." Then I would go on directly to Nellie Grant's engagement, and then I would offer to sing a little song that my old master had sent me, and give him time to recover himself; and when he went—I thought this out very carefully—I would press his hand very tightly, and say that we were all so sorry that he was going, and we should all look upon him always as one of our dearest friends.

"When you are a great man," I would say, "I shall be very proud to have known you—but not more proud than I am now. There are things that I won't say, only—God bless you, Lord Eversby, and make you happy."

I was not able to do anything of the sort, for he walked up to me in his resolute way—the girls always said that he pounced upon us as if we were lions or tigers—and gripped my hands, and said his say before I could begin.

"I love you most dearly, Nan," he said. "Will you be my wife?"

I sat down on the music-stool and stared at him. I was never so frightened in my life!

"I never thought of such a thing," I told him. "I—I never thought——" I stared at him again.

"Never thought of it!" he cried. He seemed as astonished as I was. "Well"—he looked very angry—"you gave me encouragement enough!"

"Oh, Lord Eversby!" I cried a little. "I didn't—I wouldn't—I—I am so used to people admiring the girls, and—they are so different from me, and——"

"What!" He opened his eyes wide. "You thought I wanted to marry one of *those babies!*"

"Yes," I owned. "I did, indeed I did. They are young, of course; but they are so beautiful and bright, and I—do understand, Lord Eversby, I think most highly of you and like you exceedingly, but—but I never dreamt of your caring for me. I'm such—such a dull, plain little thing."

"Oh, Nan!" he said. "You don't know what a dear woman you are; and as for beauty—have you ever looked in the glass when you smile? Won't you think of it for a little while before you answer? Won't you, Nan?"

"Yes," I promised, "I will. I—I couldn't marry anyone just for friendship or liking, dear Lord Eversby. It would have to be—much more. If—if I could learn to, I—I should be glad. But how can I tell?"

"You will tell me when you find out?" Or—I may ask you again in a week?"

"In a week," I agreed. "You won't ask me before, will you?"

"No dear. You will be friends for a week, won't you?"

"I shall *always* be friends," I said. "I am greatly honoured, Lord Eversby, very greatly honoured. Now shall we go for a little walk?"

I wanted to make him see that I really liked being friends, and I hoped very much that I should learn to be more, but I did not know.

I went upstairs for my hat. When I walked to the glass I saw myself smiling—and I couldn't help thinking that I seemed just the least bit pretty—and I noticed that I was singing joyously to myself, and then I *knew!* I ran downstairs directly with my hat in my hand. I could not be so cruel as to keep him in suspense a moment longer, and I made up my mind that I would not let my pride stand in the way, but tell him frankly and make him happy.

So I walked up to him and held out both my hands.

"You may ask me now," I said.

RECIPROCITY.

"You say," the Editor remarked,
"Your verse is full of fire."
He wagged a finger inked and grimed,
And chuckled as he deftly primed
The editorial briar.

"But though your verse is full of fire"—
His voice rang harsh and terse
As to the b'azing hearth he turned,
And with his foot the epic spurned—
"My fire is full of verse!"

Charles Vivian.

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JU-JITSU FOR HEALTH

A striking photograph showing Miss Studholme in the act of throwing her instructor.

How Women may Benefit from Practising the Japanese System of Self-Defence.

By Marie Studholme.

Particular interest is attached to the following article, on account of the fact that Miss Marie Studholme, the well known actress, was one of the first ladies in England to take up ju-jitsu, the Japanese form of self-defence, which, however, has now, since the introduction of ju-jitsu schools for ladies, become extremely popular with the fair sex on account of its health-giving properties as an exercise.

Only a few years ago the unwritten laws of fashion decreed that it was "out of order" for a woman to indulge in any but the mildest forms of exercise, and doubtless many people will remember that even when cycling was first introduced as a healthy pastime for women, that most capricious and whimsical of old ladies, Mrs. Grundy, greeted this innovation with undisguised disapproval.

To-day, however, fortunately for the general health of the weaker sex, doctors and athletes have so vigorously championed any and every exercise for women, as long as that exercise is not unwomanly, that pastimes which once would have been considered quite "impossible," are now looked upon with the greatest favour.

But we in England are proverbially slow in taking up innovations and new ideas of any kind, and, doubtless, it is this national characteristic of "caution" which has hitherto prevented many people, especially women, from seriously taking up ju-jitsu, the Japanese method of physical culture.

Indeed, I must confess that, when first the advantages of this exercise were pointed out to me, I was myself a little sceptical about the so-called benefits a course of training would bestow. However, as an interesting experiment from a health point of view, I decided to give ju-jitsu a chance, and in a very short time I was convinced that the merits of Japanese physical culture had not been in the least exaggerated.

Moreover, I am now firmly of the opinion that there is no exercise in every way more suitable for women, especially in these hustling, bustling days, when few of us can spare the time to take sufficient outdoor exercise really to benefit the health. In this respect, however, ju-jitsu is unique — it can be "made" either an outdoor or indoor exercise, while ten or fifteen minutes' daily practice will be found ample.

It is, too, quite an erroneous idea to imagine that ju-jitsu tricks are too complicated and too difficult to learn to be really interesting or valuable from the standpoint of health, for I have no hesitation in saying that those who will take my advice and practise some of the holds described in this article will find that the pastime is a most simple and fascinating one, while, providing the exercise is taken regularly, they will surely benefit immensely in health.

In the first place, it must always be borne in mind that knowledge of balance, and how to disturb that balance, is one of the secrets of the Japanese form of self-defence which has, I am told, been practised by the women of Japan, as far as authentic records can be found, for at least twenty-five hundred years. And as there is little doubt that Japanese women are, physically speaking, the strongest

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The first position before applying the "side throw."

and healthiest in the world, the merits bestowed by a regular course of ju-jitsu can be understood at once.

I cannot, I think, give a better example of the wonderful amount of independence with which a knowledge of ju-jitsu imbues a woman, than by relating an amusing incident I witnessed not long ago at the training school where I had gone for a lesson. A certain friend of mine who, a few days previously, had been chaffing me about my enthusiasm for Japanese physical culture, had looked in to see for himself some of the wonders I had described.

My instructor, noticing that my friend, who was a particularly powerful man, and stood over six feet high, was gazing with a look of cynical amusement at a couple of little brown Japanese women practising some locks and holds in a far corner of the room, remarked politely: "You, sir, like to try the ju-jitsu with the lady teacher?"

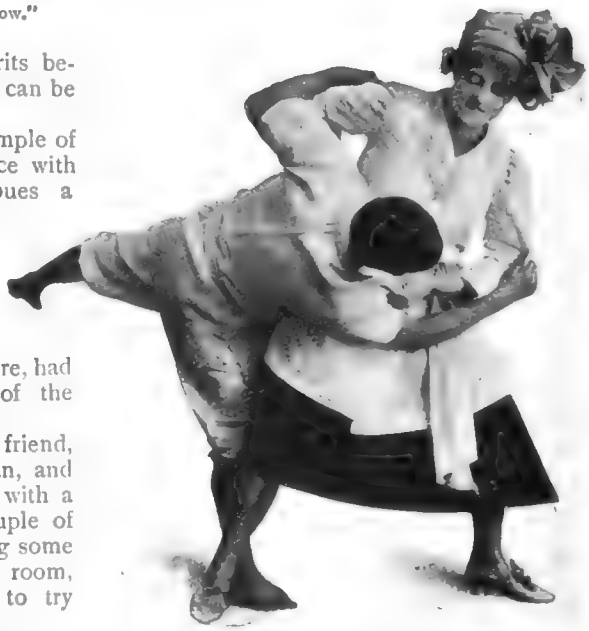
"Oh, I say, no," he replied, laughing heartily. "That's hardly fair, is it? as I weigh at least twice as much, and Heaven only knows how much taller I am!"

"That no matter, sir," said the instructor, more politely than ever. "I see you won't hurt the lady, and the exercise is good for what you call the health."

So, in a few minutes, garbed in regulation gymnasium costume, a tall, powerful man of six feet was smilingly facing a little Japanese woman at least eight inches shorter, who, however, seemed in no way disconcerted at the obvious physical disadvantages she was suffering from; and, indeed, to judge from the quiet air of confidence with which she approached her opponent, she was feeling little misapprehension as to the results of this friendly bout.

For three or four seconds the strangely-matched pair were engaged in coming to grips. But suddenly, in far less time than it takes to describe the incident, there was a scuffle, followed by a fall, quickly succeeded by three pats on the floor made, not by the little Japanese woman, but by her strong opponent—my erstwhile scornful friend—who found himself in a position from which extrication was impossible—hence the three pats on the floor, which is the invariable Japanese signal of defeat.

With a dazed look, my friend faced his opponent once more, only to find himself



The "side throw," or "pull over." The rapid turn of the body and the placing of the right leg in its position in front of an opponent's are of particular importance. As the right leg takes up its position, pull sharply and strongly with the left hand, which should be immediately across the body, to the left side, with elbow bent. In this way the "side throw" so completely disturbs an opponent's balance that he falls sideways over the obstructing leg.

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again patting the floor three times in fewer than five seconds.

Six further consecutive efforts he made to grapple with the wonderful scientific locks of the little Japanese woman, whose features all the time were positively sphinx-like in their imperturbability, until finally she smiled her thanks when he acknowledged that he was utterly unable to continue the struggle.

Of course, complete ignorance of Japanese physical training on her opponent's part in this particular case almost necessarily resulted in the victory of a skilful Japanese woman, who had been initiated into the mysteries of ju-jitsu since her childhood days. But, all the same, the incident graphically describes how a weak woman can defeat a strong man solely by the latter's superior strength, if only she will take the trouble to study some of the holds and locks.

And as for hooligans and street roughs—well—I am very sorry for any of these "gentlemen" who try their cowardly tricks on even a little girl who has become skilled in ju-jitsu. For instance, the pickpocket, or street robber who boldly demands "your money or your life," will find the tables turned in no half-hearted fashion should he run up against an opponent who has made a study of this wonderful self-defence. And as cases of cowardly robbery from women appear almost daily in the press, it will probably repay those ladies who chance to read these lines if they will study the following trick:

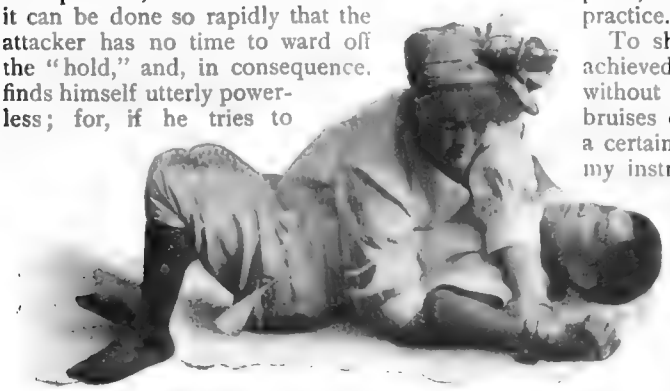
Pretending to hand money or its equivalent, it is merely necessary to grip the would-be robber's left wrist with the right hand, and then force it backwards.

On paper, perhaps, this "hold" sounds too simple to be really efficacious, but, with a little practice, it will be found that it can be done so rapidly that the attacker has no time to ward off the "hold," and, in consequence, finds himself utterly powerless; for, if he tries to struggle, so deadly is this grip, that he must inevitably break his own wrist. Yes, believe me, any man or woman who masters this trick will become a veritable hooligan's terror.

How the "side throw" is brought into play.

By the way, there would seem to be a common impression among ladies that a course of ju-jitsu lessons must necessarily mean an almost unlimited supply of bumps and bruises for those who practise the holds sufficiently vigorously. Strangely enough, however, this is not the case at all. The various holds and locks are so scientifically worked out that it is never necessary to exert any strength to bring them into play—the sole difficulty lies in becoming sufficiently familiar with the holds to "put them on" at the required time. But obviously this is purely and simply a question of practice.

To show you what wonders can be achieved by Japanese physical culture without enthusiasts suffering from bruises or stiffness, I will just explain a certain throw about which, when first my instructor told me that a woman could do it, I admit I was decidedly sceptical. By this wonderful "trick," however, a very weak and light woman, only weighing perhaps between seven and eight stone, can toss over her head a man twice her own weight, and inestimably stronger in every way, without the slightest strain or effort.



An "arm lock" applied to a thrown opponent. By gripping his left wrist with the left hand and bringing the right hand under the opponent's upper arm, the strongest adversary is rendered helpless, for by levering with the right arm an immense strain bears upon his elbow.

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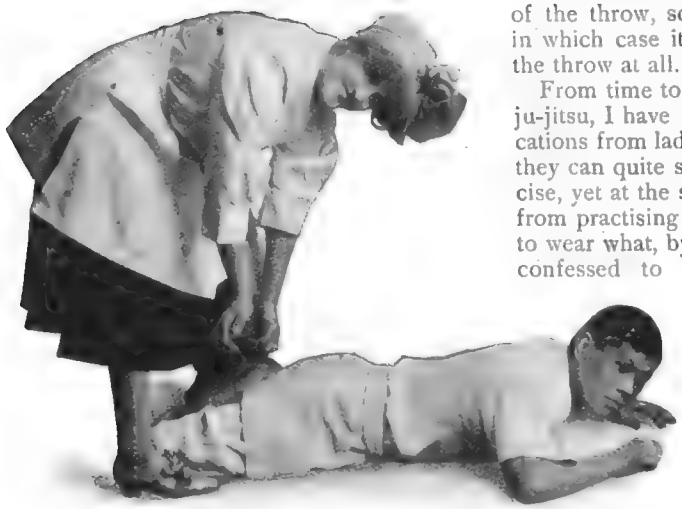

The "leg hold." The slightest pressure on the foot when this position is gained would break the leg of the Japanese instructor.

The great secret of this trick, I have learnt, lies in the rapidity with which it is performed, while, when one becomes really expert at it, it is possible, nay easy, to throw one's opponent, so that he or she, as the case may be, falls to the ground after completing a somersault without suffering the slightest harm.

This is how it is done. Advance towards your opponent and catch him with both hands by the lapels of his coat, or, if you happen to be practising with a woman, by the front of her blouse. At the same time raise the right foot against the inside of his or her left thigh and as high up as possible. Then, at the very same moment, jump as close to the opponent as possible when, by throwing yourself backward to the ground with as much force as you can, your opponent must inevitably go over your head. I would point out, however, that while this fall is being made, the leg placed against your opponent's thigh should be straightened out just at the moment of the throw, so that it may act as a lever, in which case it is quite impossible to resist the throw at all.

From time to time since I have taken up ju-jitsu, I have received amusing communications from ladies pointing out that, although they can quite see how valuable is the exercise, yet at the same time they are deterred from practising it through the fear of having to wear what, by the by, a certain lady, who confessed to weighing over eleven stone, described as "horribly unbecoming garments." Now this, I may say, is quite a mistake, for although it is scarcely necessary to point out that corsets cannot be worn while practising Japanese physical culture, loose-fitting garments of any sort are, however, quite suitable. In fact, the ordinary ladies' gymnastic dress cannot be bettered, although, instead of wearing a woollen jersey, a comfortable linen coat, kept in place by a linen band tied in a bow, is to be preferred.

First position to be taken up when an opponent attacks from behind with his right hand. After gripping the wrist, as the attacker lunges forward, in the manner shown in the illustration, at the same time placing the right foot immediately in front of the striker's foot, it is the simplest matter in the world, by a slight pull forward, to throw him heavily to the ground.

As regards shoes, as many women—I confess I am one of them—will not care to practise in stockinged feet, low-heeled foot gear is to be recommended, for athletic work in high-heeled slippers or shoes is quite out of the question.

And now I think I have very little more to add, except that I shall feel that this short article will not have been written in vain if others are induced to practise ju-jitsu for ten or fifteen minutes daily. I do not claim, of course, that this humble effort is a scientific treatise on Japanese physical culture, but, at the same time, sufficient information is contained in it to prove to those who will give it a trial how valuable ju-jitsu is as a health cure.

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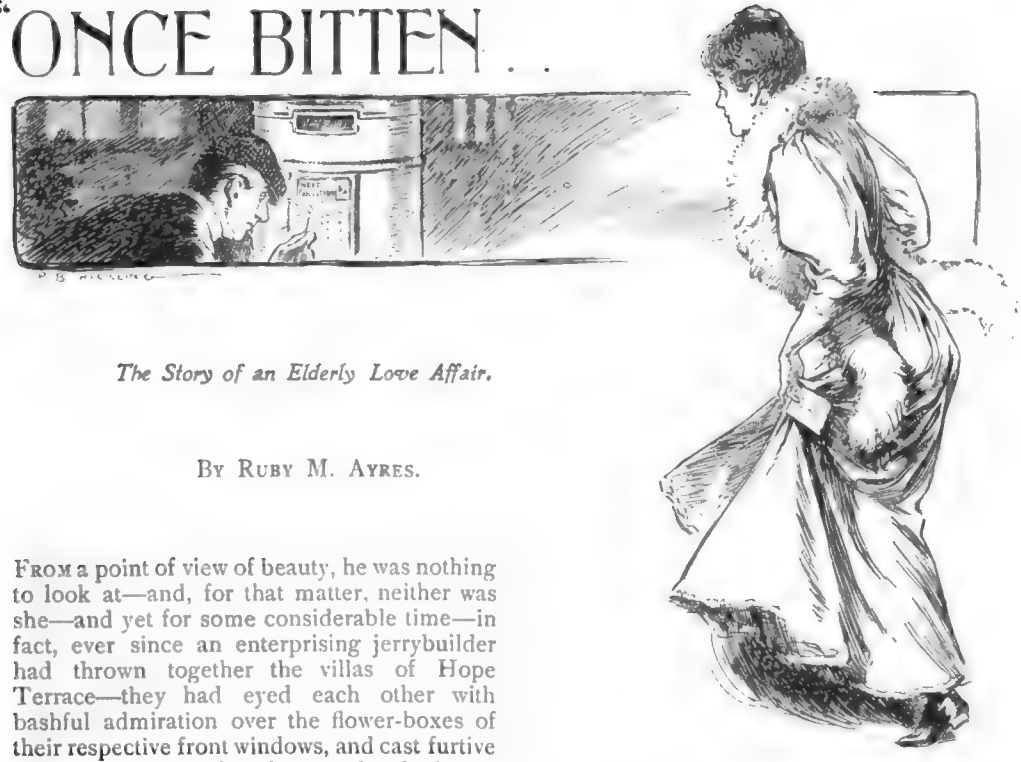
"ONCE BITTEN . . ."



The Story of an Elderly Love Affair.

By Ruby M. Ayres.

From a point of view of beauty, he was nothing to look at—and, for that matter, neither was she—and yet for some considerable time—in fact, ever since an enterprising jerrybuilder had thrown together the villas of Hope Terrace—they had eyed each other with bashful admiration over the flower-boxes of their respective front windows, and cast furtive glances at each other from under the brims of their respective hats, when they happened to meet in the street—which was pretty often.

But to the lonely, middle-aged outlook of Thomas Hallett, the little woman who snipped dead geranium leaves from the flower-boxes in summer, and scattered them with crumbs for the sparrows in winter, was everything that she should be.

He spent half his days wondering what the men could have been thinking about to have allowed her to retain her own name so long, and the other half in wishing that it lay within his power to make her change it.

But there were a great many reasons why the last-mentioned desire was impossible of fulfilment—the chief being that he had not the pleasure of the lady's acquaintance.

True, he had once rescued her cat from the attentions of a pugnacious terrier in the street, but she had never seemed overwhelmingly grateful, and it was impossible for Thomas Hallett to know that quite as much shyness existed in her slender little person as did in his own bulky proportions.

The other reason was that she possessed the same name as the one and only woman to whom—in the whole course of his forty odd years—Thomas Hallett had plucked up enough courage to propose.

All his life he had been afflicted with terrible shyness, and when—as a lad in the twenties—the one woman whom he had honoured with his regard had laughed at him for his pains, he had vowed that the operation should never be repeated, and had treasured the memory in his heart ever since, as a warning for the future. She had long since married, and passed from his life; but the way she had laughed at his protestations of love had echoed in his ears for nearly a quarter of a century when he took up his abode opposite Hope Terrace—and all his resolutions fled at the first sight of the little, slender woman who snipped the geraniums, and scattered crumbs for the birds.

From that moment Thomas Hallett began to realise that he was a lonely man.

He looked round the bachelor bareness of his front room, and wondered if there would not be space for a second arm-chair in the corner by the fire opposite to his own—or, perhaps, even next to it.

He pictured himself reading aloud discreetly chosen extracts from the newspaper to a little, gentle-faced woman, with neat hair,

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and a trim figure, at the breakfast table, and he had even begun to contemplate attending the parish church, and putting half-crowns in the offertory bag, or perhaps sharing a large-print hymn-book with a little person who wore a plain gold ring on the third finger of her left hand, and called herself by his name.

But one blow dispelled the dream.

His landlord—who also owned Hope Terrace—called on Thomas Hallett one morning concerning a leaky tap, or a flaw in a water-pipe, or something equally uninteresting but necessary of correction; and over a glass of sherry and a dry biscuit, Hallett dragged the conversation from repairs to Hope Terrace, and from Hope Terrace to the little, slender woman.

He had remarked on the geraniums in the window-boxes, and the landlord had replied that Miss Isabella Jones was very proud of them——

"Isabella Jones"—the name was like a slap in the face to Thomas Hallett.

Since that never-to-be-forgotten day, twenty-five years ago, when he had stumbled, red-faced and wretched, from the presence of the original Isabella Jones, with her laughter ringing in his ears, the name had been to him like a red rag to an infuriated bull. And that the little woman over the road should be called the same seemed to come as a double warning.

True, the name of "Jones" was common enough, and one might come across half-a-dozen "Isabellas" in as many yards, but for the two to be coupled!

Well, he must do without the second arm-chair, that was all, and be content to continue propping the newspaper against the coffee pot, and reading its contents (without the discreet selection) to himself.

For two whole days Thomas Hallett never looked out of the window, but on the third—well, on the third, he saw in the sideboard-glass, which stood opposite to the window—the reflection of a slim and dainty figure coming sedately down the steps of the only villa in Hope Terrace which interested him—and resolutions went to the wind, and Thomas Hallett went to the window.

Providence—or the dressmaker—had decreed that Miss Jones should be wearing a new, and very becoming, dress, and before its simple bravery the heart of Thomas Hallett went down like a ninepin, and he registered a vow that, name, or no name, before six months had passed he would not only have the second arm-chair in the corner by the fire, but that Miss Isabella Jones should be its occupier.

After all, she would no longer be "Jones"—and he could pleasantly substitute some such mode of address as "My dear"—for the obnoxious Isabella.

But, as all the world knows, resolutions are easier to make than they are to carry out, and at the end of a week Thomas Hallett was no nearer completing his than he had been before he made it, and he was beginning to feel decidedly wretched.

It was November for one thing—a depressing month at the best—and for another, the vicar of the parish, who was a widower, had called on Miss Jones twice in one week—a thing he had never before been guilty of in the knowledge of Thomas Hallett.

The afternoon of the second call, Hallett threw his paper on to the floor as the vicar was admitted within the desired portal across the road, and vowed that something must be done, and that right speedily.

When dusk descended he was still racking his brains for a solution of the difficulty, and even the advent of his housekeeper with the lamp threw no light on his doubts and perplexities. "If it were in a novel, now," he said to himself, "I should hit on some wonderful plan in half-a-second, and the last page'd be turned to the tune of wedding bells, and all the rest of it——"

He scowled at the fire, as if resenting its cheerful glow.

Out in the road a gate creaked—Hallett knew the creak of that gate well; he also knew whose voice it was that presently said "Good-evening"—in a tone of ecclesiastical benediction.

The scowl deepened—the situation was becoming serious.

Hallett got up from his chair, and wandered round the room to his bookcase.

He had some vague notion that he would find the solution of his troubles amongst the uninteresting volumes that nobody ever took from their shelves except at spring-cleaning.

A magazine some months old—which he had kept because the face of a girl on the cover reminded him of Miss Isabella Jones the Second—attracted his attention, and he picked it up and went back to his chair by the fire.

He turned the pages idly enough at first, till his attention was caught by the title of a story.

It was called "The Solution," and in his state of depression it flashed across the mind of Thomas Hallett like an omen for good.

He would read it.

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As a rule, Thomas Hallett had a wholesome and hearty contempt for the average short story, with the average romantic girl and love-sick man, and wonderful tangle of misunderstandings and separations, from which they extricate themselves in the final paragraph without the least difficulty; but with the creak of that gate ringing in his ears, and the remembrance of a slim hand and wrist that had that morning uprooted the geraniums, and tidied the boxes for the winter, in his perturbed mind Hallett was perhaps as dangerously near the sentimental as he had ever been in his life.

He read the opening lines of the story with but faint interest; but when the second paragraph revealed to him the fact that the heroine's name was Isabella, he sat up very straight and read the remainder through without missing a word.

And as he read his eyes grew brighter, and the cloud on his brow lifted by magic, and at the last word (which, by the way, was an exclamation of rapture from the heroine, as she fell into the arms of the hero), he tossed the magazine down on the floor, and sprang up from his chair with an almost schoolboyish shout.

"I'll do it!" he said aloud, bringing his fist down in the palm of his hand. "I'll do it!" Then he picked up the magazine, and placing it almost reverently on the bookshelf, sat down at his writing-desk. An hour later two finished letters lay there side by side, and Thomas Hallett was regarding them with eyes that were guiltily proud.

The first was short and extremely formal, though it had been rewritten many times, as the contents of the waste-paper basket testified.

Mr. Thomas Hallett presents his compliments to Miss Isabella Jones, and would consider it an honour if she would allow him to send her some crocus and hyacinth bulbs for her boxes, to replace the geraniums which he saw removed this morning, as he has more than sufficient for his own windows.

This production worried Hallett. He had never before realised how difficult it is to write gracefully in the third person; but as he despaired of ever improving on it, he decided he must leave it as it was.

The second letter was longer, and had taken even longer to compose.

DEAR THORNTON (it began),

I regret that I have not answered your letter sooner, but I have had a great deal to worry me lately. I am glad to hear that you are well and prosperous. In answer to your question, no, I am not married, and though you will probably laugh, and say that there is no fool like an old fool, I do not mind admitting to you that I should very much like to call myself a happy Benedict.

My dear Thornton, she is the Ideal Woman!—little, and slender, and neat, but, alas! I do not know her. You may laugh at me—I laugh at myself—but I once heard it said that love is like the measles, the older one is the worse one takes it, and I am inclined to indorse that sentiment.

"She"—for many reasons I refrain from mentioning her name—lives opposite to me, and when I see her go in and out of her little house, or watch her tending her flowers, I realise that I am a lonely old bachelor.

You will ask, why do I not get an introduction? For the simple reason that we have no mutual friends, or even acquaintances, unless one counts the landlord, who is extremely uneducated, and who would probably deprive my name of its aspirate as a commencement.

Sometimes I picture her moving about my little house, or sitting in the arm-chair opposite to me by the fire, working or listening while I read to her; but then I awake, and remember how impossible it all is, as I do not even know her, and probably never shall. Were I a younger man, perhaps I should find a means of gaining my desire; but, alas! what is there about an old bachelor such as I am to take the fancy of so charming a woman?

There is also another barrier between us. The lady of my choice bears the same name as the one woman to whom, in boyish infatuation, I proposed twenty-five years ago.

She laughed at me, Thornton, and for want of a better explanation, let me quote the old proverb: "Once bitten, twice shy."

So I sit alone at my window and sigh for the impossible. You, my dear Thornton, so happily married yourself, may be able to help or advise me. If so, pray do.

With kindest regards to your wife and yourself,

Believe me, yours most sincerely,

THOMAS HALLETT.

Hallett signed his name with a flourish, and sat back to regard his handiwork.

Be it here said that amongst his friends and acquaintances there was nobody of the name of Thornton, which was, however, a detail of apparently small importance to the writer of the epistle.

Had there been, it is extremely unlikely that a man so shy and reserved as Hallett would ever have *thought* even of confiding in him; but as it was, well, he had merely borrowed the idea from the story in the magazine, and proceeded to complete his strategy by folding the letter into the envelope addressed to Miss Isabella Jones, and sealing it with great exactness.

The note written in the third person he carefully put away in his desk, and leaving the room went down to the post before his unwonted courage had died a natural death.

It died at precisely the same moment that the letter dropped with an ominous thud into the pillar-box, and a cold perspiration broke out on the brow of Thomas Hallett, as he

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leant his bulky person against the wall and gasped.

Once again the mocking laughter of the original Miss Isabella Jones seemed to ring in his ears, and make the winter evening hideous. Once again he lived through those awful moments when he had fled from her presence, and vowed that he would never, never, *never* give another woman a thought so long as he lived; and now—what had he done? He had allowed himself to be governed by his admiration for a neat figure, and a slim hand, and he had allowed his better judgment and level-headedness to be run away with by a story in a magazine!

At that moment Hallett would have bartered all his worldly possessions to regain that letter which lay but a yard from him, and was yet as utterly out of his reach as if the whole world stretched between them.

He struck a match and looked at the hour for the next collection—it was due in ten minutes—well, he would wait and bribe the postman with untold gold to return the letter to him.

A step sounded on the muddy path at his side—a light step, a woman's step. Hallett turned—it was "she!" In the dull November evening there was no mistaking the slim daintiness of the woman, and the heart of Thomas Hallett rose again as he looked at her.

She had come to post a letter, too, and she looked at him half timidly in the dim light as she passed.

He lingered for a moment, watching her, then he squared his shoulders, turned away, and went back home with a defiant carriage. For good or otherwise, Thomas Hallett had burnt his boats.

* * * * *

It was barely ten o'clock the following morning, when Thomas Hallett brushed his coat, took his best hat, and went down the steps of his own small abode, across the road, and up the steps of Miss Jones' even smaller abode.

When he shut his own front door behind him, his courage was a thing of enormous proportions, and his determination even larger; but when the front door of Miss Jones' immaculate villa was opened by Miss Jones' immaculate small maid, courage and determination—as Hallett knew them—needed to be sought for beneath the microscope.

As a man in a trance he heard himself ask for "the mistress," and as a man in a trance he engineered his bulky form down the narrow passage to the minute back room, and found himself shut in with the dainty feminine knick-knacks that only served to heighten the sense of guiltiness and misery under which he was labouring.

Then—after a short time, during which it was impossible for Hallett to know that Miss Jones had examined her small, flushed face in every glass in the house to make sure she was looking her best—she came in, and the sledge-hammer that had been beating in the side of Thomas Hallett with suffocating noise calmed down at sight of her, and resumed something like its normal steadiness.

Even if he *had* made a fool of himself—and there was still the hope that he had *not*—was it not worth it to be in the same room with her for even a few moments—to feel the magic of a woman's presence, after the twenty-five lonely, uncomfortable years of bachelor existence.

"Madam," said Thomas Hallett, when she had asked him to sit down and he had refused, chiefly because none of the chairs looked capable of undertaking his weight, "I have come to apologise for an inexcusable mistake that I have made. You must know by this time to what I refer" (Hallett had rehearsed this speech all the time he was dressing), "and I can only offer my humble apologies, and beg you to believe that it was indeed a mistake, and—and——" He could not remember what came next.

He fumbled in his pocket and produced the note about the crocus and hyacinth bulbs.

"This was the letter I intended to send you," he added.

Miss Jones took the crumpled paper silently, and read it through without speaking.

Then she looked up slowly, and their eyes met.

The flush in Miss Jones' face deepened.

"It is most kind of you," she faltered. "I—I shall be very pleased to accept the bulbs——"

There was an awkward pause.

Hallett was conscious only of an enormous sense of relief.

She was not going to laugh at him—she was not going to be indignant even—*she was going to accept the bulbs!* Might not that even mean, perhaps, that some day—in the dim and distant future—she might even accept something of greater proportions—his unworthy self!

The thought made him positively dizzy.

Her voice brought him back to time and the situation.

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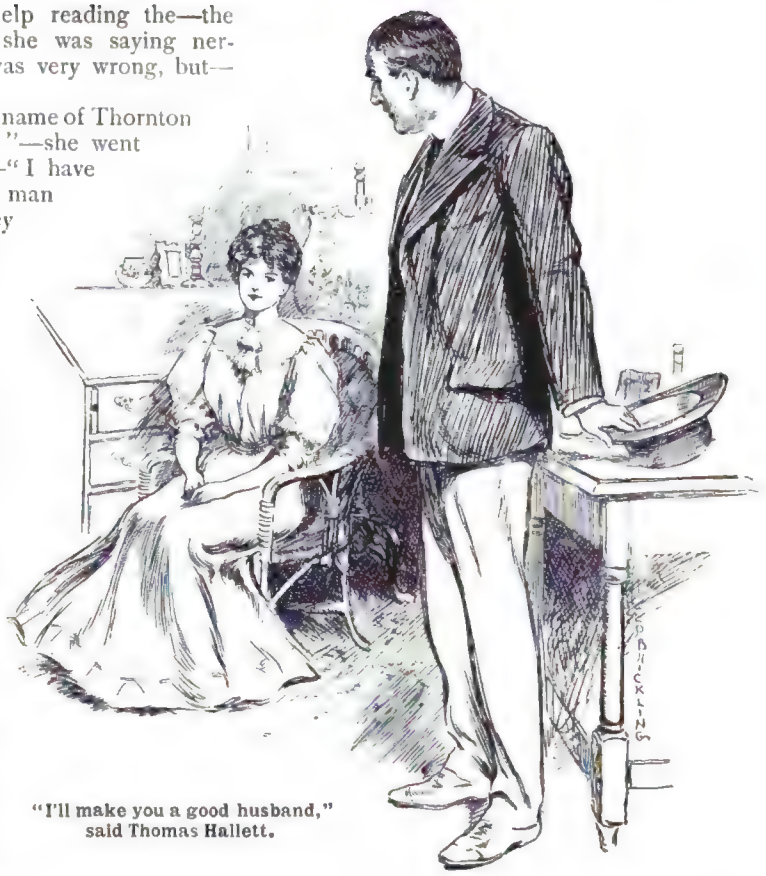
"I—I could not help reading the—the letter you sent me," she was saying nervously. "I know it was very wrong, but—well——"

She broke off. "The name of Thornton was so familiar to me"—she went on with a little rush—"I have a friend who married a man of that name, and they are such a happy couple—quite a model couple—I wondered, perhaps, if they might be the same people—or, perhaps, related?"

There was an awful pause. This was a contingency for which Hallett had not prepared.

It seemed an eternity before he could think of anything to say. Then he realised that it was a case for the truth if ever there was one—and he told it.

He told her of his luckless courtship five-and-twenty years ago—of his admiration for her—his wish to know her—his dismay when he heard her name—his forebodings—even his jealousy of the vicar and the reading of the magazine story and its result.



"I'll make you a good husband," said Thomas Hallett.

"I'm not a clever man," he said, "and I quite realise that I have behaved—well, like a fool—but if ever, in time to come, you could think it over——" He paused, and came a step nearer to the little woman who had sunk down into a chair, her small hands folded nervously together. "Could think it over and forgive me——" Another pause, longer this time.

"I'll make you a good husband," said Thomas Hallett.

He took up his hat from the table where it was reposing uncomfortably amongst photograph frames, and without another word or look he went out of the small room, and down the small passage, and out of the house, leaving Miss Isabella Jones wondering whether she were dreaming, or whether either of them, or both, had suddenly taken leave of their senses.

She sat—looking before her at the place where, a moment before, the huge form of Thomas Hallett had effectually blocked out the daylight—for quite a long time. Then she got up with a smile on her pretty, prim face, and crossing the room, looked at herself in the glass over the mantelshelf.

"I believe he really means it," she said aloud.

* * * * *

Once Hallett had shaken himself into starting towards the goal of his desire, he allowed no grass to grow beneath his feet.

The following morning he wrote another note, also in the third person:

Mr. Thomas Hallett presents his compliments to Miss Jones, and humbly begs to be allowed to bring across the crocus and hyacinth bulbs.

To this—for three days—no answer was vouchsafed.

Hallett's fond hopes soared from earth to Heaven, and back again, with a very unromantic thud, to earth.

He told himself he had been mistaken—she *was* angry—she *was* laughing—she did

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Hallett . . . had torn open the note and was eagerly scanning the neatly-written lines.

not want the flowers—she did not want him—the ending of the story in the magazine was not to be the ending of his own story—there would never be a second arm-chair by the fire—he would never read the newspaper to a dainty little woman with small, pretty hands—he would always be a bachelor—he would never put half-crowns in the offertory bag—he would never share hymn-books with a little woman who bore his name. Here the thought grew more than unbearable. Hallett sprang up from his arm-chair and strode to the window.

He had not seen Miss Jones for three days—she had not even been out to do her shopping, unless, indeed, she had gone out the back way. Perhaps she was ill—perhaps he had upset her—perhaps even she was going to marry the vicar!

It was out of the question for Hallett to guess that Miss Jones had never in the whole course of her life wasted so much notepaper as she had done in the past three days trying to answer his formal request.

He walked away from the window and back to the fire, but the one arm-chair in its solitary state seemed to mock him and add to his despair.

He went back to the window. The short winter afternoon was already drawing to a close, though it was not yet three o'clock. Soon the blinds would be drawn down over the way, and another endless evening would commence.

What was she doing?—what was she thinking?—what——

The door of Miss Jones' house opened suddenly, and the trim figure of Miss Jones' maid came down the steps—came across the road—came up the steps of Hallett's bachelor abode.

Hallett held his breath. There was a knock—and something was put through the letter-box.

Hallett waited no longer—he literally hurled his massive form across the room and out into the small hall, and he had already grabbed the note from the mat where it had fallen, when his housekeeper, all amazement, appeared from the kitchen region.

But Hallett had no eyes for her—he had torn open the note and was eagerly scanning the neatly-written lines.

Miss Jones presents her compliments to Mr. Hallett, and will be very pleased——

He went back to his sitting-room and brought his huge fist down on the padded back of his solitary arm-chair.

"Old friend," said Thomas Hallett with solemn emphasis, "the bachelor days are over. We'll both have a partner in life by Christmas Day. Mark my words!"

And they both did.

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PICTURE PARAGRAPHS.

The Editor is Always Pleased to Purchase Photographs Suitable for Use in These Pages. Each Photograph should be Accompanied by a Short Description.

FROGS AS PETS.

THE gentleman in the picture is Mr. Pliny Jewell, and he is seen in the act of feeding his tame frogs. At five o'clock in the afternoon Mr. Jewell takes his seat by the side of the pond and rings a bell. Instantly fourteen large bull-frogs emerge from the water on to the bank. Mr. Jewell feeds them with live mice. He inserts the tail of a mouse into a crack at the end of a stick, and dangles it in front of the frogs. They jump at it and capture the bait, easily pulling it from the stick by their own weight. As a rule the fourteen frogs take from twenty to twenty-five mice in this fashion. As soon as they capture the bait they leap into the water, where they quickly devour it. Curiously enough, should a mouse get free while in the water, the frogs will not attempt to chase it.

All the frogs have names, the pride of the collection being Grover Cleveland, a veritable monster of the frog world.

Photo *Illustrations Bureau.*

This is "Toots," the smallest dog in the world. She weighs 23 oz., and to hear her bark the ear must be put close to her mouth.

THE SMALLEST DOG IN THE WORLD.

"TOOTS" is small, but distinguished. She is the smallest dog in the world, weighing but 23 oz., while to hear her bark it is necessary to place one's ear close to her head. Toots comes of an unsubstantial family, for her father turned the scale at only four pounds, and her mother at three. The diminutive Toots is a black and tan, and as she is nearly a year old it is unlikely that she will grow any bigger.

Photo *Stuart, Hartford, Conn.*

At five o'clock in the afternoon Mr. Pliny Jewell, of Hartford, Conn., sits by this pond and rings a bell. Instantly fourteen large bull-frogs emerge from the water, and Mr. Jewell feeds them with live mice. The tail of a mouse is inserted in a crack at the end of a stick, and the animal is dangled before the frogs.

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A GIANT JERSEY CABBAGE.

ALTHOUGH the giant cabbage is quite common in Jersey, to which island it is peculiar, this is a particularly fine specimen even for Jersey.

Cabbages, five, six, and seven feet high grow like hedges on the sides of the valleys, but this plant has reached the considerable altitude of twelve feet.

These giant cabbages are often to be seen side by side with the ordinary variety, when the contrast is particularly striking.

The leaves are used as food for cattle and horses, but it is chiefly for its stalk that the giant cabbage is grown.

Dried, polished, and topped with a silver knob, these stalks make handsome walking-sticks, light as the best Malacca cane, though with all the appearance of formidable bludgeons.

Photo *C. F. Roberts'n*

A good specimen of the giant Jersey cabbage. This particular one is twelve feet high.

A certain English lady who visited Jersey not long ago was particularly struck with the giant cabbages of the island.

Not satisfied, as the majority of tourists are, with buying one after it has been turned into a walking-stick, she obtained a genuine cabbage, roots, leaves, and all.

This she carried off in triumph, on her departure, to the boat, and never let it out of her sight till she arrived at her home.

THE ELEPHANT HOTEL.

THOUGH inns boasting titles such as the "Red Lion" and the "Blue Boar" are common enough, the title is the only suggestion of the animal that has supplied the nomenclature.

But in the case of the Elephant Hotel at Atlantic City, New Jersey, the idea of an elephant has been carried into the architecture of the building, and the hotel forms a large model of that noble animal.

The structure is eighty-five feet high, and contains a drawing-room, dining-room, kitchen, and four bedrooms. The kitchen is in the head, the eyes forming kitchen windows.

Access to the interior is gained by means of spiral staircases in the hind legs.

The hotel was built twenty-five years ago, and still enjoys a large measure of popularity. No fewer than twelve thousand square feet of tin were required to cover the Elephant Hotel.

There is a plaintive expression on the face of this elephant. Although twenty-five years is a mere fraction of the age an elephant should live to, this one seems already saddened and cast down to an undue extent by the cares of existence. Its very trunk is languid.

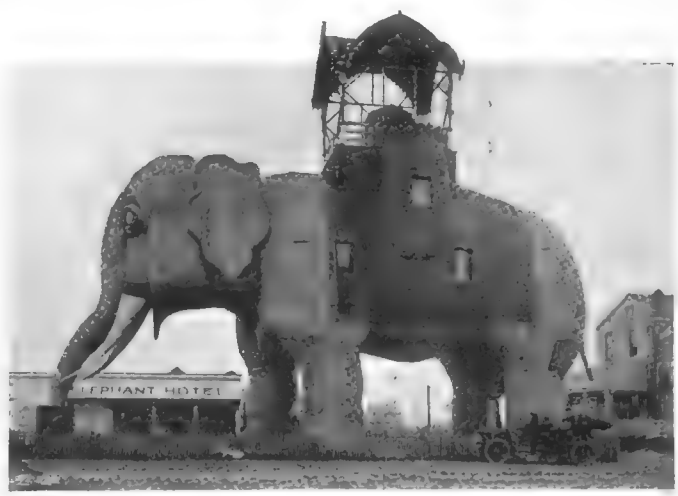

Photo *T. Ellison, Boston.*

The Elephant Hôtel, Atlantic City, N.J. It contains a drawing-room, dining-room, kitchen, and four bedrooms.

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KANGAROO-DOG KANGAROO.

Unique Pictures of a Savage Combat.

It is not often that a kangaroo-dog and kangaroo fight is recorded pictorially, for as a rule the kangaroo gives the dog a long and tedious run at great speed before the pair come to blows, and the photographer, laden with the apparatus peculiar to his calling, is unable to come up with the combatants until the matter is settled in favour of either one or the other.

Photo W. E. Sanders.

The first round of the battle; getting to grips.

In the present instance, the photographer was driving, having a kangaroo-dog and his camera with him in the trap. It is one of the characteristics of the kangaroo that it will always allow a vehicle or a man on horseback to approach nearer than a dog, or a man on foot. As the trap came closer to the kangaroo, the dog was allowed to jump out, when it immediately made for its quarry. This action took the kangaroo completely by surprise, so much so that the dog was upon her before she had time to jump away.

Thus the battle was fought out under the eyes of the photographer, and he was able to take the interesting photographs reproduced on this page.

To tackle a kangaroo at bay is no easy task even for a kangaroo-dog, and the fight was a fierce and savage one.

The kangaroo's great object in all such combats as the one illustrated is to annihilate its enemy with one terrible downward rip of its hind foot.

In this case, however, the dog succeeded in avoiding such a doom, and proved one too many for its adversary.

It will be seen that as far as size and reach were concerned the kangaroo-dog was equally well favoured with the kangaroo, but the latter had the advantage in the matter of weight.

The photographer ran no little risk of receiving an injury from the infuriated animals, accidentally, of course, since they were far too occupied in struggling with one another to trouble about him. Still, in spite of this drawback, he has obtained very satisfactory pictures.

The man in the lower illustration, a boundary rider on the station where the fight occurred, is holding in his arms the "Joey," as it is called in Australia, or little kangaroo, that was found in the large one's pouch.

The victorious dog has gained great fame among the local residents, fame not entirely undeserved.

Photo W. F. Sanders.

The last round, showing the kangaroo-dog victorious. The boundary rider is holding the "Joey," or little kangaroo that was found in the large one's pouch.

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Photo *Half Tones Ltd.*

Where could be found a finer-looking bunch of grapes than this? In reality it is nothing of the kind, but merely a photo of a toy-balloon seller and his stock turned upside down, as will be seen if the page be reversed.

GRAPES?

"WHAT beautiful grapes! What splendid bunches!" are natural exclamations on seeing this picture for the first time. But are they grapes after all? Don't they look a little too large, and even if they don't, what are they growing from? Not a grape-vine, in any case.

As a matter of fact, they are not grapes at all, but the stock of a toy-balloon seller. If the page be reversed, he will be seen struggling with his wares, and endeavouring to keep them in order. What would happen to him if a gale sprang up it is horrible to think of; he would be swept about the earth the mere sport of the rushing winds.

But the illusion of a bunch of grapes is excellent, and very few people would guess what the picture really represents without turning it upside down, or right side up, whichever way you look at it. Another point which excites the admiration of the beholder is the admirable patience of the owner of these balloons.

What laborious days and sleepless nights the balloon merchant must have spent in blowing up such a goodly multitude of his wares. On the other hand, the great work may have been done on the co-operative system, and then we have the pretty picture of the balloon man, his wife and his children spending many happy and profitable evenings blowing up balloons.

CINGALESE ADVERTISING.

THE inhabitants of Ceylon recently enjoyed the novel sight of a horse surmounted by a diminutive jockey who affected the well-known American seat. On the noble steed was inscribed the word "Neverill" in large white letters which, as the horse was black, showed up in bold relief.

"Neverill," it may be mentioned, is a patent medicine, and taking "sweet are the uses of advertisement" for their motto, the management decided on the uncommon means above described for making known the existence of their infallible panacea to all and sundry.

Needless to say, their efforts were successful, and the sales of "Neverill" are reported to have increased a hundred-fold.

No one enjoyed the novelty more than the small boy who guided the horse along the principal thoroughfares. His glee at the brief but delightful notoriety that was his knew no bounds, and no monarch in procession, no triumphant general could have displayed greater pride.

To each of us his hour, and whatever exalted position this boy may one day fill, whatever greatness he may achieve, he will never be more pleased with himself than when he advertised "Neverill."

A novel advertisement that appeared recently in Ceylon. "Neverill" is a medicine.

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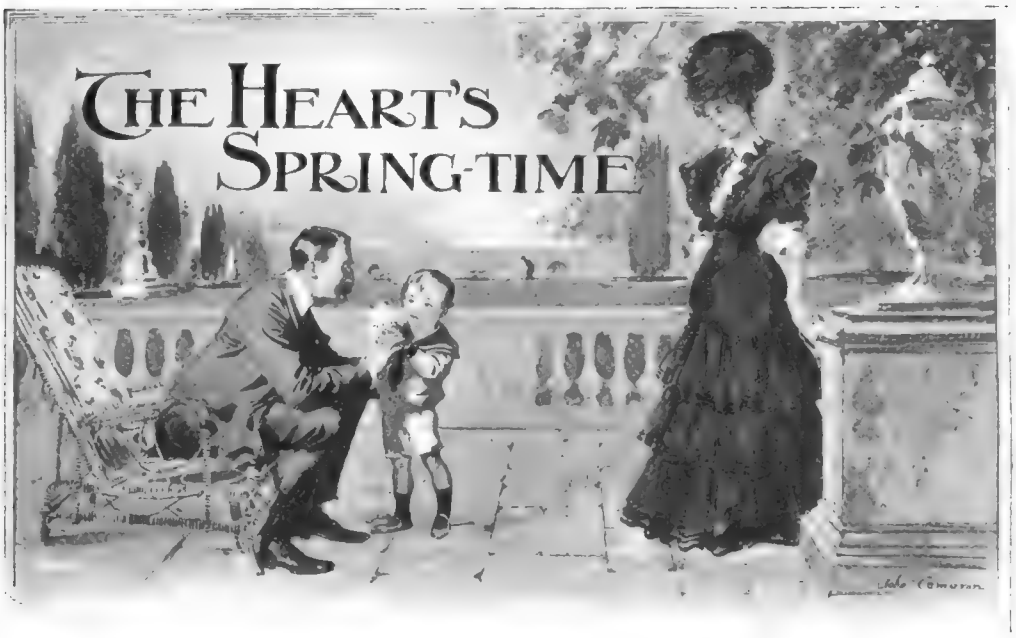

How a Little Child Brought Peace to Two Wounded Hearts.

By M. H. Black.

"Who lives in the big house among the trees?" the child asked eagerly, bursting in on his mother as she sat talking to her first caller.

"Hush, hush, Raymond, darling!" Mrs. Archer drew her small son into her arms. "You ought not to interrupt——"

"But I do want to know, mummy! Jane and I walked past the gates; there are big stone dogs sitting up on stone pillars on each side, looking just as if they were going to bark."

"The child means the Grange," the visitor said with a bright smile.

She was a middle-aged woman with a pleasant, sunburnt face. Hard, some people called her. Strict, evil-doers labelled Miss Maynard, but children and dogs adored her, knowing no fear. After all, what else, or who else really counted?

"Tell me." Little Raymond Archer ran to her side. "I do want to know all about it. I saw the house among the trees. Jane lifted me up and I looked over the hedge."

"An ogre lives there. You take my advice and keep away," Miss Maynard nodded.

"Would he eat me?" The boy's eyes were round with breathless curiosity

"Well, no; perhaps not exactly that; but you would not be welcome—no one is. Thereby, alas! hangs a tale," she said aside to her hostess; "even the spring-time is not welcome at the Grange. Think of a man"—she turned impulsively to Mrs. Archer—"who can look on a day like this, and yet feel only hatred, malice, and all uncharitableness to his neighbours!"

"Poor thing!" It was the boy who spoke. "Poor ogre, doesn't he like the spring-time? Why, since mummy came home with father they've talked of nothing else. I thought everyone was happy in the spring—mummy said so!" He flung down the challenge boldly.

"I mean that everyone ought to be happy in the spring-time, darling; it is all so lovely, you see." She spoke half apologetically to her guest, yet somehow she felt that this little old maid understood. "It is so long since my husband and I have known an English spring. India has nothing like it. The hedgerows, the flowers, the hawthorn trees—the very spirit of spring in the air—I have sometimes longed for it." She brushed her hand lightly across her eyes. "And now I have found it all again. The boy has spent the last five years with his grandmother. He cannot realise how it is the spring means so

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much to his father and to me, can you Raymond?" She ended with a laugh.

"Has the ogre got no heart?" the child asked curiously; they had forgotten him.

"Why, he would not be an ogre if he had one, would he?" Miss Maynard said quickly with a smile; and Raymond was silently pondering the question deeply in his own mind.

Before long Major Archer came in, and after Raymond had departed to his tea, Miss Maynard told them the ogre's story; at least, what was known about him, which, in truth, was hardly anything at all.

Very little was known, save that the name which was now his had not always been the one by which he was called. It appeared that he had suddenly succeeded the old owner of the Grange, and had been obliged to take his name with his wealth and possessions. So as Challoner of Redfield he was now known by all those in whose midst he lived, a total stranger, the most heartily hated man of the whole neighbourhood.

No one ever saw him; in fact, it transpired, as she continued, no one had ever seen him or met him. He came straight to the Grange, shut himself up within its gloomy gates, and there, guarded by his stone dogs, which glared down defiance on all intruders, he passed his days in solitude: known to be a hater of mankind, giving to no one, supporting no charities, a man at war, so it would seem, with God, his fellow-creatures, and himself.

Soon Miss Maynard went away, leaving behind her a pleasant memory.

"I like her, Jack," Mrs. Archer told her husband, as they stood together watching her departing figure. "She had a good word for everyone, and, in fact, almost for the village ogre himself!" For Miss Maynard's last words had been: "It's a beautiful afternoon, just the kind of afternoon to make one feel sorry for quite the wrong kind of people, I suppose. I mean poor Mr. Challoner at the Grange. I know he is immensely rich, but he is poor to me for all that. When I think of him glooming his life away at that mouldy old Grange I feel heartily sorry for him."

There was someone else sorry for the ogre, it appeared, that night in Redfield, too. Surely such a thing had never happened before. For Raymond Archer, long after he was tucked up in his little white bed, lay and thought about him — the poor ogre who hated everybody, so Miss Maynard had said, and whose heart knew no beauty of springtime.

The Archers had taken a pretty little house on the outskirts of Redfield village for the time of Major Archer's leave in England; and the month of May found them settled there, enjoying it as only those who have been exiles in far-off lands can ever fully understand or enjoy the beauties of an English spring.

To little Raymond his parents' delight in it all was a trifle puzzling. Spring was very nice, certainly, mixed up in his mind with memories of chocolate Easter eggs. But other seasons were just as nice. There was winter, with Christmas in its train, and the lovely surprise parcel from his mummy in India. That mummy of whom he had no very distinct memory, but of whom he loved to think, especially when he sang lustily the hymn about "India's coral strand." He always pictured her on a coral strand, though in his inmost soul he was not quite sure that he knew exactly what it meant. His father had been an even less distinct figure, represented solely by the photograph of a man with a kind, good-natured face, dressed in uniform, and holding on rather tightly, Raymond thought, to a sword. After all, he supposed it was the right way to hold one, and nothing could ever be much worse to a soldier, he concluded, than to have his sword taken away.

But happy though he was with them, there were times when he did not understand them; in particular he could not appreciate their delight at quite ordinary, everyday things. He had not soon forgotten his mother's rapt face the day they had found a hedge-sparrow's nest in the hawthorn hedge at their gate. They had counted the little blue eggs together, and she had gazed at them with such bright eyes. Later he had overheard her telling his father: "Four eggs, Jack. Four lovely little blue eggs! Oh, dear! and the long, long time since I last found a hedge-sparrow's nest in a hawthorn hedge!"

His father had bent down and put his arms round her and kissed her. The child somehow, without any resentment, felt himself for the time forgotten, and had watched them later, when they went out together, stepping on tip-toe to look at the nest. Such a trifling matter, and yet his father, a big, grown-up soldier who carried a sword, had seemed almost as pleased and excited as his mother.

Truly, they were a strange and wonderful couple. And the very next day after Miss Maynard's visit he had brought his mother a bunch of primroses gathered with much

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care; and when he had given them to her she had kissed them, and buried her face among them; and he saw she was crying.

"Don't you like them, mummy? Do they make you feel sorry?" he had asked, stroking her hand with his own little grubby one.

"No, no, darling." She hastily dried her tears. "I can't explain. They are the voice of spring. I am crying, Raymond, darling, because I am so glad."

And Raymond had returned to play, sorely perplexed.

That afternoon Aunt Lucy came to stay. She wasn't really his aunt, but she was his mother's greatest friend, and they had not met for years. But though she was a great traveller, she always, when in England, went to see little Raymond Archer and his grandmother, so that he knew her quite well, and loved her accordingly.

Once, long ago, when he was quite a baby, Aunt Lucy had stayed with his parents in India. Sometimes she told him of that time, and of the journey home when his mother and he had travelled with her; but it struck him she never seemed really glad to talk about India, and in all her travels she had never returned there.

He had not soon forgotten his mother's rapt face the day they had found a hedge-sparrow's nest.

When she arrived that afternoon at the little house in Redfield, there was great rejoicing, and Raymond felt almost a little hurt that she seemed, in her joy at seeing his mother again, to have forgotten him; and he stole off into the garden by himself.

Then it was that a brilliant idea came to him. He thought about the ogre—the poor ogre, for whom the spring meant none of the lovely things it meant to some people.

That was perhaps because he had never heard its voice. The voice of spring, that his mother had told him was to be found in the primroses. What if he were to gather him a bunch of primroses, too, and take them to him, and tell him to listen for the voice? Would it then not begin to sing for him as it did for others? And then, perhaps, that mysterious thing of which Miss Maynard had spoken — the heart's spring-time — would come for the poor ogre who lived all alone, guarded by his stone dogs.

So Raymond went into the little wood and picked a big bunch of primroses, and crept out on to the road and ran in the direction of the high gates with the stone dogs, as fast as his legs could carry him.

When he got there he paused for a moment and looked up. He felt the fierce gaze of the dogs transfixing him, and for a moment

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he grew almost afraid. Then he remembered that one day he hoped to be a soldier like his father, and possibly fight far worse things than stone dogs, so he squared his little shoulders and strode forward.

But the gates were locked. He walked away a little disconsolately. He must be a very fierce and terrible ogre indeed to shut himself up in such a manner, and surely he required more than ever to hear the voice of spring calling to him to make him happy and glad.

Suddenly he noticed a tiny gap in the high hedge. How had it come there? Perhaps a serious oversight of the ogre's many gardeners; or, perhaps, who can tell? an angel—the spirit of spring herself—had made it in the night. Raymond crept through with heart beating quickly, and ran up the long avenue so fast as to suggest that the stone dogs themselves were at his heels.

At last he turned a corner, and there before him lay a beautiful old house, bathed in clear spring sunlight, the ogre's castle, and yet not the dark, frowning one such as he had pictured.

It was surrounded by green lawns, and a wide stone terrace, to which flights of stone stairs led up from the garden. On the terrace Raymond spied the figure of a man sitting in a big chair in the sunshine.

"It is the ogre himself!" he whispered, and his heart gave a thump! What if he should suddenly rush towards him and seize him, and carry him into his castle? If he turned and ran away, who knew if he would ever find the hole in the hedge again? And perhaps the ogre would turn the stone dogs into real ones, so that they might eat him up!

But he was not a coward really, and summoning all his courage he stepped bravely forward.

He ran lightly over the close-clipped lawns, and gardeners in the distance watched his progress in horror! Many were the years that must have flown by since last a little child had run across the sunlight in that garden.

As Raymond's feet pattered on the stone steps the ogre rose from his chair. The child thought it odd that he had not seen him before, and that it was only at the sound of his feet that he rose; but perhaps he had been reading. As he drew closer he saw there was no book in the ogre's hand, nor the sign of any lying beside his chair.

"Who is there?" The voice was cold and hard.

Raymond thought it was very strange he should say just that, when he already stood only a few paces away. Perhaps it was the question, or the way that the man turned uncertainly towards him, and stood there with raised hand warningly, that told the boy with a swift flash the truth. The ogre could not see. The poor ogre, whom all Redfield was frightened of, and hated, was blind! And this was his strange secret, and why he hated everyone and would speak to no one. He could not see! could see nothing of the beautiful spring-time, nor his beautiful castle, nor even the spring flowers that all the world loved. Then a swift thought came to the child—though he could not see the flowers, he could smell their sweetness, surely, and hear the voice of spring singing in the primroses. Most certainly he would never be afraid again of the ogre.

"Is anyone there?" the stern voice asked a second time, and Raymond hurried foward.

"Please, it is only me," he said waveringly, "and I have brought you some primroses."

"You have done what?"

"Brought you some primroses. I didn't know you couldn't see them—really and truly;" his voice rose with anxiety. "I am very, *very* sorry, but you can smell them. Mother says they smell of the spring, and you can hear the voice——"

"The voice!"

"Yes, the voice of spring, that mummy says lives in the primroses."

"Child! for you are a child, what, and who are you? And have you dared to come here to mock me?"

"Oh, no! please, you must not think that. I really did not know. I am only a little boy—you must not mind me—don't be afraid of me!"

It somehow did not seem a bit strange to say that to him, for there was a look of helplessness about him that filled the child's heart with pity, and made him feel so much the stronger.

"Come and sit down beside me," the ogre said very gently, "and tell me all about it. First, where are your flowers?" His hand went out gropingly.

Raymond's face flushed with delight. Poor, lonely ogre, after all he *did* care for the flowers. He put them into the outstretched hand without a word.

The ogre took his bunch of primroses, and raised them to his face, and his lips moved silently as they touched them.

"Don't you smell the spring?" the boy inquired anxiously. "And can you hear the voice?"

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But the ogre shook his head.

"Child, child! there is no spring for such as I, and the voice you speak of is dead."

"Oh, but it can't be. Miss Maynard says it was never too late. She is quite old—she ought to know—and, besides, spring is a spirit, and a spirit never dies."

"A spirit never dies," the man repeated musingly. "Sit down, child, and tell me more."

So Raymond found a chair, and they sat there together for a long time, talking of many things. Raymond told him how Miss Maynard had said he was an ogre. Then he grew afraid.

"So you don't think I am a very bad ogre after all?"

His new friend smiled a sad little smile as he spoke.

"No, you are much too nice to be an ogre—unless you are a good ogre. Do you suppose there *can* be good ogres?"

"You've found one, you say, anyway, my little friend."

And Raymond was very pleased, for the ogre had called him his little friend. They walked about on the terrace together, and Raymond guided his new friend down the stone steps, and across the lawns among the beautiful flowers.

At last they returned to the terrace.

"I must go home now," the boy said apologetically. "Mummy will be looking for me."

"Won't you come back again to-morrow, little friend?"

"Oh! may I? Dear ogre, may I, *truly*, really and truly come? I will bring you more flowers," he added, "those are all dead." For the bunch he had brought with him were still held in the ogre's hand, and they were faded and drooping.

"No, they can never die for me, little friend," the ogre answered. "All else has withered at my touch, but your flowers shall surely live." Then he flung his sorrowful mood from him. "You will come back to-morrow, and we will walk in the garden again?"

"Yes, indeed," Raymond answered brightly. "You know, now that Aunt Lucy has come, mummy won't want me so much." He wondered why the ogre seemed to quiver as if he had been hurt when he spoke his aunt's name. What a strange ogre he was! "Father goes fishing all day," he rattled on cheerfully, hoping to lead the conversation into brighter channels. "He is home on leave from India just now."

"You have never told me your name yet, little friend," the ogre said in a curious, muffled voice, and Raymond took a long breath.

"My real full name is Raymond Brentford Archer," he said slowly.

The ogre had seated himself, but at the boy's words he rose to his feet, his face very strange and white. When he spoke again his voice was quite soft and kind, however.

"You must not stay any longer now, Raymond, but come back to-morrow. Run home to tea, and when you say your prayers to-night pray for one who is very lonely and forsaken."

"I won't forget. And I—I'll pray that—that one—you know—who is lonely and forsaken may find the heart's spring-time after all. Miss Maynard said it was never too late."

Then he went away down the long avenue, minding the stone dogs not a bit. Was not the ogre his friend? Had he not asked him to return? And as he ran home, the ogre himself, the man he had left behind, stood on his wide terrace, the warm sun beating on his sad, disfigured face, a smile, such as for many years none had seen there, hovering round his mouth. His lips moved slowly and softly, so softly that none save only Raymond's spirit of spring could have heard him as she flitted among the flowers or danced in the sunbeams. It was a name he uttered, a name that had not crossed his lips for many years, and it was that of little Raymond Archer's Aunt Lucy!

* * * * *

The spring days glided past, bringing contentment to Mrs. Archer and her husband, and also to her friend, the woman with the sad, wistful eyes that peered out as if ever looking for that which she knew she could never hope to find.

They shed a new peace, too, over the ogre's castle. Almost every day little Raymond might be seen sitting on the terrace by the ogre's side, or leading him through the garden. And the man felt the stiff bands that held him prisoner loosen their hold, and he spoke to the boy as he had never thought it possible to speak to a living being again.

He never tired of the child's voice, and grew to know his footsteps when they were still far from him.

Major and Mrs. Archer let the child go, smiling at his strange new fancy for the village mystery, as they called the ogre; but realising that the ogre's friendship was for Raymond only. And the child, for some reason he

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"Dear guide, dear eyes!" he whispered, raising her hand to his lips."

could not quite discover, never told them the ogre was blind. Somehow they seemed so happy, so gay, he did not believe they would understand, and he felt in a vague way that the ogre hated his blindness so terribly that he would not like even his little friend to speak of it. Some day, though, he thought, he would perhaps tell Aunt Lucy. She had a sad face that reminded him a little in an odd way of the ogre's, and she, he thought, would understand.

One day he sat with his mother and Aunt Lucy, when Major Archer came in, bringing with him a tin dispatch-box, which he said he was going to tidy. His wife laughed at him, and so did Miss Courtney, but for all that he started, and he began by emptying the contents on to the floor—papers, and letters, and bundles of photographs. Soon he began to talk of something else, and forgot the dispatch-box. Raymond crept close to the heap on the floor, and asked if he might look at the photographs, and his father lightly gave his permission.

Suddenly the child gave a little excited shout.

"Who's this? Who's this?" he cried, running to his mother's side.

Mrs. Archer took the photograph from his hand, and when she saw it, threw a reproachful glance at her husband. But before she said another word she laid a gentle hand on Lucy Courtney's. They were sitting close together, and Miss Courtney must have seen the photograph as clearly as Mrs. Archer.

It was that of a soldier. Much the same as the one Raymond had known as his father, and said good-morning to ever since he could speak at all, but the face was a graver one than Major Archer's, yet to the child it was oddly familiar.

"That—is—an old friend of father's, darling," his mother said quietly; but Miss Courtney took the photograph from her hand, and went on speaking. "He was a very brave soldier, Raymond. One that his

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country and those—those—who loved him must always remember with pride."

Here she, too, suddenly stopped, and it was, after all, Major Archer who continued the story.

"When you are a big boy, Raymond, old man, you'll understand all about it better. He was my friend, and the bravest man I've ever known. Once he held a pass on the Indian frontier single-handed against desperate odds until help came, and, later, he carried men who were grievously wounded one by one out of the line of the enemy's firing. The last man he brought into the fort was your father, Raymond."

The child wondered why his mother was crying, and what made Aunt Lucy's face so white.

Major Archer went on slowly: "He did the last hundred yards in the darkness, Raymond, they told me afterwards—for—those black devils"—the man's voice shook passionately—"had shot his eyes out."

"And he was blind!" Raymond had risen to his feet, the others looked at him in wonder. Suddenly a look of doubt shone in his eyes. "I don't suppose his name was Challoner."

"Challoner!" What possessed the child! He could think of nothing save the man at the Grange, whom no one had ever seen. "No, his name was Brentford. You are named after him, Raymond Brentford. He was my best friend——" Suddenly Major Archer stopped and turned aside. "I am sorry, Lucy; forgive me, I could not help it. It was the child who asked." He laid a kind hand for a moment on hers, then walked out of the room, and his wife, still crying quietly, went out after him.

Only Aunt Lucy remained.

"Will you tell me more, please, Aunt Lucy? I want to know, because the picture is so like my dear ogre at the Grange, only his name isn't Brentford—and what makes mother mind so much?"

"He was a very brave man, and he lost his sight saving your father, darling. It always makes her cry whenever she speaks about him, because she remembers everything, though it is a long time since we lost him."

"Then he is dead!" The boy's voice was hushed.

"No, we do not know that for certain, but we have lost him all the same. There are worse things than death."

Lucy Courtney seemed half to have forgotten the child. "He was engaged to be married about the time he fought so bravely, to a girl who loved him very dearly. She was in India staying with a great friend of hers. Together they waited for the fighting to be over so that the two they loved might return to them. In the end only one came, and it was not—not Captain Brentford. The girl who loved him waited and waited, but he never came. Now she knows why—knows that he never will come.

"Long afterwards someone—a woman who had always hated her—sent her a letter to say that she was dying, and she wanted to tell her of a cruel trick she had once played her long ago in India. She liked the poor brave man who lost his sight very much, Raymond, and because of that she did not want him to be happy with that other girl, and so she went to him, quicker than the girl could—before he was really better and well again—and told him that the girl would not marry him because he had lost his eyes—that she meant to say to him that she would 'be eyes to no man.'

"Well, he believed it—he never gave the girl the chance of saying the cruel words that other woman had told him she meant to say—he went right away home to England, and never saw any of his friends or the people who loved him again. No one has ever heard of him all through the long years—perhaps he is really dead; but since that letter came to the—the—girl, she has searched for him, to explain it all to him, everywhere, the whole world over. She has grown old looking for him, but she fears she will never find him now."

"I do wish his name had been Challoner, Aunt Lucy, because then you and I might have gone to that girl and told her that perhaps we had found him, for once the ogre told me a story about a girl who had been very cruel to him, killed all his faith and trust, he said. I don't quite know what he meant—sometimes I don't understand a bit—but I think it comforts him to speak to me; I am his little friend, you know." The boy's face was very grave, his clear, serious eyes looked into hers, and slowly a radiant light shone across the graveness. "Aunt Lucy, once he told me his name had not always been Challoner of Redfield! Do you think—oh! do you think it can have been Brentford?"

She had risen to her feet, but though her heart was beating wildly her voice was calm as she answered:

"You forget, darling, the poor man we have been speaking of had his eyes shot out long ago—he was blind!"

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"Yes, but that is just it!" the child cried eagerly. "You see my poor ogre is blind, too!"

* * * * *

The afternoon sunshine flickered on the stone flags of the terrace, and the ogre sat alone listening for the footsteps of his little friend. As he sat there he fell to dreaming of all sorts of lovely things that had come to him in the past, and that he had sternly thrust from his heart when the world had proved to him cold, and dark, and faithless, all for a woman's love, and he had shut himself up for ever in his old inheritance.

The child's voice, the child's prattle of spring and beauty, had stirred the old dreams in their deep grave and awakened his heart again—the heart which Miss Maynard, the little old maid in the village, had said he did not possess!

Spring, youth, hope! Had they not for ever passed him by—a useless hulk upon the roadside, that even the woman he loved had had no pity for?

The voice of spring was to him the voice of the child talking to him in his garden; all other voices were stilled for ever! And the spring-time of the heart—of which the boy spoke with a wisdom beyond his years—alas! it could never return to him any more.

Suddenly he raised his head, for he knew that the boy was near him.

"Little friend," he called gaily, "come quickly and exorcise the devils!"

"I don't quite know what you mean," Raymond answered, a new note of suppressed excitement in his voice, "but I've brought you a bunch of primroses; will they do it?"

"You alone can cast them out, little friend." Suddenly he held his head up. "Is there anyone else there? Are you alone, child?"

Little Raymond laughed a strange, quavering little laugh, then glanced behind him to where his Aunt Lucy stood—a tall, slim figure with shining eyes brimful of pity, but round her sorrowful mouth hovered a smile—the smile of one who after long search has crowned a bitter quest with victory.

"Only the Spirit of Spring, dear ogre," the child replied with happy inspiration, slipping his hand into his friend's.

"Do it very gently, Raymond dear," his Aunt Lucy had said, as they crept up the long avenue together, "and let me be quite near to him first."

It was their secret between them. Even his mother did not know yet that Aunt Lucy knew the ogre, and was going to see him with Raymond. He felt a little nervous in case the ogre would not be pleased to have her, only she seemed so positive.

And then they turned the corner and saw him sitting there alone on the terrace, a pathetic figure, indeed, for all his wealth and great possessions, lonely and forsaken in his terrible affliction. The woman by Raymond's side had buried her face in her hands and wept.

But when she heard his voice again after all the years she grew calm, and when the child spoke to him of the Spirit of Spring she smiled upon them both.

"The heart's spring-time is coming—I was asked to tell you that," the boy said softly.

"Who told you that, little friend?" The ogre's voice was sad as he asked the question.

Raymond laughed joyously and clapped his hands.

"Aunt Lucy says so, and she is here herself, close by your side, to tell you so, and she is always right!"

All his life Raymond will remember the ogre's voice as he called her name, and her face as she caught his hands in hers. Soon he wandered away alone, leaving those two who had so much to say to each other together.

He explored the ogre's garden as he had never done before with the poor blind ogre by his side. All the lovely things he discovered would fill a book. The summer-houses, the ponds, the streams with little rustic bridges crossing them, the fountains, and particularly the one in whose marble basin he saw the gold-fish flashing in the sunlight.

On the green lawns, backwards and forwards, the ogre walked, with Lucy Courtney by his side. His face was transfigured, and from hers the years had rolled away, leaving it young and fair once more. Behind them stretched the grave in which they had for ever buried all old wrongs and cruel misunderstandings.

"And I shall be your guide, Raymond, and your eyes for as long as life shall last," she said softly as they walked.

"Dear guide, dear eyes!" he whispered, raising her hands to his lips.

Somewhere behind them in the lilac-bushes a bird's song soared clear and sweet to Heaven, and in the distance little Raymond's joyous laughter rang out on the still air.

"The Spirit of Spring is here, as the child said truly," he added gravely, "and the heart's spring-time has come to me at last!"

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CAP AND BELLS

ANYTHING TO OBLIGE.

"Have you ever loved another, Tom?" said Miss Gush to her intended.

"Certainly," he replied. "Do you wish for written testimonials from my previous sweethearts?"

* * * * *

UNKIND.

GUEST: "What have you got?"

WAITER: "I've got liver, calves' brains, pigs' feet——"

GUEST: "I don't want a description of your physical peculiarities. What you have got to eat is what I want to know."

* * * * *

COMFORT IN AFFLICTION.

A lady residing in a quiet village in Suffolk used to take an interest in a very aged couple who were spinning out the last thread of life in "Darby and Joan" fashion, seated on either side of the fireplace. She often paid them a visit to cheer them up. The old man had been ailing, and at last a day came when the visitor found only one chair occupied. Darby was not in his usual place.

"Where is your husband?"

"Well, mum, he be gone at last."

"Oh, I'm sorry. That is very sad for you," said the lady, seeking to find some words of consolation.

"Yes, mum, it be sad," replied the old woman, "but then, you see, he were fearfully in the way of the oven."

WHAT THEY DID.

"Why do women so often wander so aimlessly in the murky solitudes of the dead past, brooding over days for ever gone?" asked a young lady of a marrying widower.

"They don't, I think," he said. "Rather they wander, especially at sale times, in the drapers' shops of the present, often asking the price of articles which they have not the remotest intention of buying."

* * * * *

QUITE OTHERWISE.

A young officer quartered in the West of Ireland, having been questioned in letters from home about the recent rains in the district to which he is exiled, wrote in reply:

"You are under a delusion. It never rains here. A cloud first saunters up and examines a town, and then collapses right over it."

* * * * *

ACCOMMODATING.

A prisoner was in the dock on a serious charge of stealing, and the case having been presented to the court by the prosecuting barrister, he was ordered to stand up.

"Have you a lawyer?" asked the court.

"No, sir."

"Are you able to employ one?"

"No, sir."

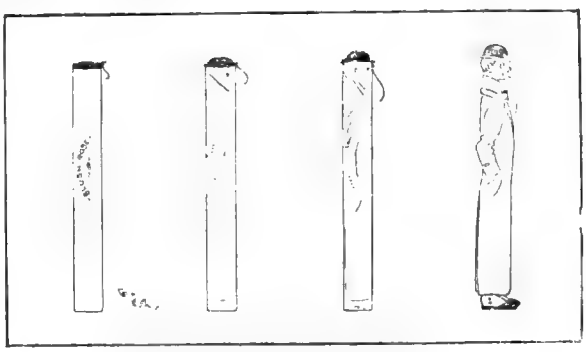
"Do you want a lawyer to defend your case?"

"Not particklar, sir."

"Well, what do you propose to do about the case?"

"We-ll-ll," with a yawn, as if wearied of the thing, "I'm willing to drop the case, s'far as I'm concerned."

* * * * *



The evolution of the cigarette smoker.

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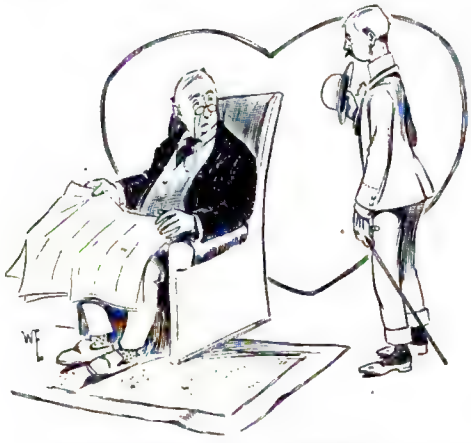


Her Young Man: "I-I-I, sir, would like——"
Her Father: "Well, what is it, young man? Why don't you stop mumbling? What have you got in your mouth?"
Her Young Man: "I-I'm afr..id it's my heart, sir."

NO DANGER.

CLERGYMAN: "My child, beware of picking a toadstool instead of a mushroom. They are easy to confuse."

CHILD: "That be all roight, sur, that be. Us bain't a-goin' to eat 'em ourselves; they're a-going to market to be sold."

* * *

GRATEFUL.

A collector of subscriptions for the brass band fund once came across a farmer who was noted for his meanness. To his surprise, the farmer at once consented to subscribe fully as large a sum as any he had yet received.

"Mr. Hardfist," he said, addressing the farmer, "you are surely very fond of music to give so much."

"Oh, yes," said the farmer, "they're grand for scarin' the crows from ma 'taties when they're practisin', an' I'm grateful."

* * * * *

BOTH AFFECTED.

"I feel all cut up about it," remarked the piece of wood that was badly splintered.

"Yes, it gave me a kind of dull feeling, too," said the axe.

* * * * *

A FALSE IMPRESSION.

AUNT: "See, our dear little Charlie is enjoying the apple auntie gave him—biting first this side, then that—the little rogue."

CHARLEY: "No, I'm not. I'm doing that to dodge the worm holes in it."

ALMOST DESTITUTE.

"Please, would you be so kind, sir, as to assist a poor man, sir. Besides this 'ere bludgeon, loaded with lead, I have nothing in the wide world to call my own."

* * * * *

KIND ALL ROUND.

"Has my boy been a little defender and been kind to dumb animals to-day?"

Yes, grandma. I let your canary out of the cage and when my cat caught it, I set Towser on her."

* * * * *

WHAT SHE LIKED.

"I think the country is just sweet," said the town young lady. "I love to see the peasant returning to his humble cot, his sturdy figure outlined against the setting sun, his faithful collie at his side, and his plough upon his shoulder."

* * * * *

POINTING A MORAL.

GUIDE: "Here you see the waistcoat worn by Lord Nelson at the Battle of Trafalgar. The bullet that ended his life went through this hole here."

NURSE (to her charges): "Do you remember, children, how I warned you about carelessness? If that hole had been mended at the proper time, the bullet could not have gone through it, and he would still be alive."

* * *

EVEN AT THE NORTH POLE.

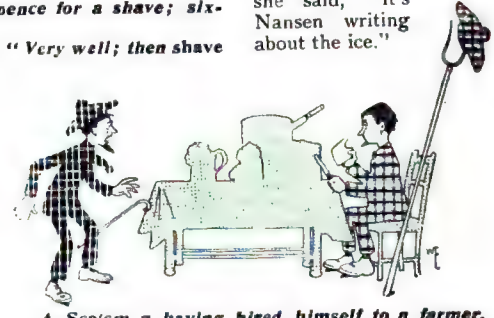
It was just after spring cleaning. She was reading in a low, thrilling voice: "When the packing begins in real earnest, it seems as though there could be no spot on the earth's surface unshaken."

He roused himself from a somnolent attitude in an easy chair.

"Who wrote that, Maria? He's been through it, whoever he is; I wonder whom he married?"

"Why, you stupid," she said, "it's Nansen writing about the ice."

Mr. Woolly Caterpillar: "What are your prices?"
Beetle Barber: "Twopence for a shave; sixpence for a hair-cut."
Mr. Woolly Caterpillar: "Very well; then shave me all over."



A Scotsman having hired himself to a farmer, had a cheese set before him that he might help himself. After some time, the master said to him:
"Sandy, you take a long time to breakfast?"
"In truth, master," said Sandy; "a cheese o' this size is na sae soon eaten as you may think."

[CAP AND BELLS continued overleaf.]

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LIPSLEY. "YOU KNOW THOSE CIGARS MISS BEACON SENT ME FOR CHRISTMAS?"
LARSLEY. "YES."
LIPSLEY. "WELL I GAVE A LOT TO MY FRIENDS, AND NOW I HAVEN'T ANY LEFT"
LARSLEY. "WHAT CIGARS?"
LIPSLEY. "NO FRIENDS."

NO PREVIOUS EXPERIENCE.

Her head had dropped upon his shoulder.

"If only," he whispered, "thy cheek could remain there for ever!"

Little thought he what was to be.

Little thought he until he got home and tried to move her cheek from his dress-coat with ammonia and alcohol.

* * * * *

QUASHING THE CONVICTION.

"Wasn't that young Mr. Tiff who left the house as I came in?" asked the judge of his eldest daughter.

"Yes, papa."

"Did I not issue an injunction against his coming here any more?"

"Yes, papa; but he appealed to a higher court, and mamma said 'yes.'"

* * * *

A DISCOVERY.

'I wonder what they mean by the fwinge of Society?" said Gussie, as he lit his forty-second cigarette.

"It must be those fellows that weah theah twousers fwayed at the ends," said Reginald, after a long and solemn pause.

And the other assembled members of the Simian Club shivered at the bare mention of such a dweadful thing.

* * *

THE LAST STRAW.

"But, Mary, you never told me why you left the Jones'."

"Well, mum, the place was all right, but the master he took to photography, and used to photograph the joints when they left the table; so, of course, mum, as I couldn't stand that I left."

***Mr. Hourhand to Mr. Minute:* "What a dreadful y fast little bounder that second-hand chap is."**

***Mr. Minute:* "Yes, thank goodness he doesn't move in our circle."**

A TRAGEDY.

Belinda lives in Bloomsbury Square,
(Oh, sweet and lovely 'Linda!)
The sunlight gleams in her billowing hair,
Her quivering eyes are wondrous fair!
(At home I hope to find her.)

For I've come this way my love to woo.
(The ring is in my pocket.)
With suppliant glance I long to sue
Her favouring "Yes." (What shall I do?
Her door! I fear to knock it!)

I've bought these roses and flow'rs galore.
(I dread to look at the bill!)
But hark! that noise from the upper floor,
Hi! open there, open wide the door!
(Belinda must be ill.)

Those screams of agony sharp and clear—
(Oh sweet Belinda, wait!)
They ring like a death-knell in my ear,
Her choking sobs I seem to hear.
(Oh pity, ye gods, her fate!)

In trembling haste I climb the stairs.
(Her death-cries still are ringing.)
I burst the door, I scale the chairs.
. . . . .
(I hurry away to drown my cares,
'Twas *sweet* Belinda singing.)

J. H. Driberg.

* * * *

VERY EXPENSIVE.

OLD LADY: "My poor man, don't you know that strong drink stingeth like a serpent, and biteth like an adder?"

BIBULOUS-LOOKING PARTY (sadly): "*This* don't, lady. It's only cheap watered stuff. I'm too poor to buy the kind you refer to."

And then the old lady knew he was a hopeless case.

* * *

PROPER APOLOGIES.

LADY EXHIBITOR (at the close of the Baby Show): "But, good gracious, that is not my baby, sir."

CHECKTAKER: "Very sorry, madam, it's the last left! The checks got mixed up somehow. But I'll take care that it shan't occur again."

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A BETTER IDEA.

CLARA WINTERBLOOM: "There is only enough to about half fill this trunk. What shall I do—fill it with papers?"

MRS. WINTERBLOOM: "No, let your father pack it."

* * * * *

NO PRIDE ABOUT HER.

MISTRESS: "You have always been so careful, Mary, that I can't understand how you happened to break that vase this morning."

MARY: "Well, you see, mum, I never have broke nothing, and I was afraid you would be thinking that I might want to get above my station."

PERHAPS SO.

MOLLY (between waltzes): "He said the world has been like a desert to him till he met me."

POLLY: "That explains why he dances so like a camel, I suppose."

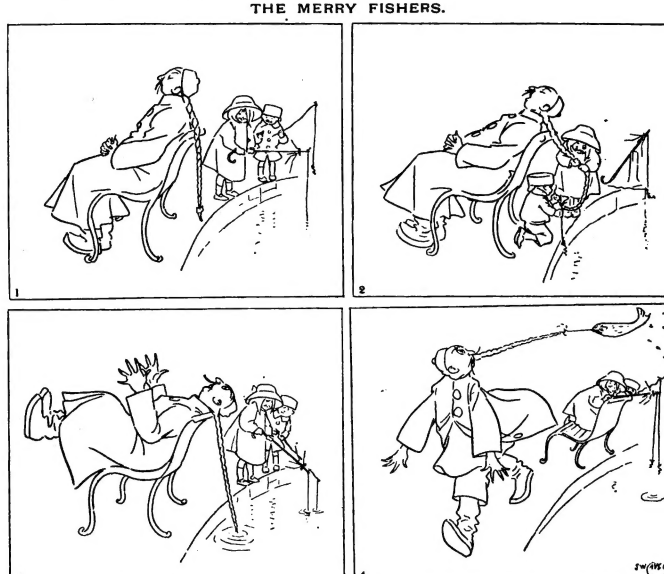
* * * * *

ABSOLUTELY USELESS.

THE LADY OF THE HOUSE: "Why don't you go to work? Don't you know that a rolling stone gathers no moss?"

TRAMP: "Madam, not to evade your question at all, but merely to obtain information, may I ask of what practical utility moss is to a man in my condition?"

THE MERRY FISHERS.



BUSINESS ENTERPRISE.

"Waiter, look here. Isn't that a hair in the butter?"

"Yes, sir; a cow's hair, sir. We always serve one with the butter to show it isn't margarine, sir."

* * * * *

A GENTLEMANLY LAD.

The boy had smashed his father's shaving mug and done sundry other damage, when his mother discovered him.

"Oh, Freddie," she exclaimed horrified, "what will your papa say when he comes home and sees what you have done?"

"Well, mamma, I don't think I would like to repeat it before you."

EXAGGERATED LANGUAGE.

SON (who has been caught reading a penny dreadful): "Unhand me, tyrant, or there may be bloodshed."

FATHER: "No, my son; there will be nothing more serious than toolshed. Come, that is where the strap hangs."

* * * * *

BEING FIRM.

WIFE (displaying a large lamp-shade, recently purchased): "Isn't that perfectly lovely, my dear? And it only cost 27s. 6d."

HUSBAND (severely): "If you wear that to church to-morrow, you'll go alone. There's a limit to everything, including hats."

[*CAP AND BELLS continued overleaf.*]

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WHAT SHE DID.

MRS. STINGY: "Oh, Clarissa, I saw such a sad thing to-day; a poor woman with a baby, shivering out in the cold, singing along the street. I never beheld anything so pitiful before in my life."

CLARISSA (breathlessly): "Yes, aunt; what did you do?"

MRS. STINGY (sighing): "Well, my dear, I was so upset that I had to go and have a cup of tea."

* * *

NOT UNNECESSARY.

"And the name is to be——?" asked the suave minister, as he approached the font with the precious armful of fat and flounces.

"Augustus Philip Ferdinand Codrington Chesterfield Livingstone Smith."

"Dear, dear!" (turning to the sexton) "A little more water, Mr. Perkins, if you please."

* * *

THEY DID THEIR BEST.

"We cannot claim that our baking powder is absolutely pure," said the canvasser; "such a thing as absolute purity is impossible. We do our best, however. For instance, we threw away a hundredweight tin last week because it was discovered that one of our workmen had carelessly made a chalk mark on the inside of the tin before the powder was put in."

The grocer surrendered.

* * * * *

CAUSE AND EFFECT.

"In looking out of doors, do you notice how bright is the green of the grass and the leaves?" asked an elderly gentleman of a little girl, whose home he was visiting.

"Yes, sir."

"Why does it appear so much brighter at this time?" he next asked, looking down upon the bright, sweet face with tender interest.

"Because ma has cleaned the window, and you can see out better," she said.

* * * * *

MISTRUSTED
"I USED TO KNOW MR SHEEKER, WHO WAS WITH YOUR FIRM. I UNDERSTAND HE IS A TRIED AND TRUSTED EMPLOYEE..."
"HE WAS TRUSTED, YES. AND HE'LL BE TRIED, TOO, IF WE'RE SO FORTUNATE AS TO CATCH HIM."
CASH

SPLENDID DEFIANCE.

MISTRESS: "Remember, Mary, if you break anything, I shall stop it out of your wages."

SERVANT (impudently triumphant): "Do it! Do it! I've just broke that fifty-guinea vase in the drorin'-room, and if you can stop that out of a pound—for I am a going to leave at the end of the month—you'll be mighty clever."

* * *

GUILE.

"They don't worry me with their savage dogs."

"How do you get round 'em, Weary?"

"When I hear a dog bark, I gits out me memory-ander-book, an' pretends to be looking round, an' takin' notes, d'yer see?"

"Yes."

"An' they takes me fer the man come fer the dog-license."

* * *

A HORTICULTURAL FACT.

"It's dreadfully queer," said the housewife, that the potatoes you bring should be so much bigger on the top of the basket than they are at the bottom."

"Ma'am," said the honest farmer, "it comes about this way. P'taters es growin' so fast now, that by the time I git a basket dug, the last ones es ever so much bigger than the fust ones."

* * * * *

INNOCENT.

MISTRESS OF THE HOUSE: "My good man, did you ever take a bath?"

TRAMP: "No, mum. I never took anything bigger than a silver teapot."

* * * * *

SEEING EVERYTHING.

UNCLE GILES: "There's one of them signs, reading: 'Look out for pickpockets.'"

AUNT FURBY: "Well, what of it?"

UNCLE GILES: "I'm going to hang about here till I see one of them critters, if I miss the train."

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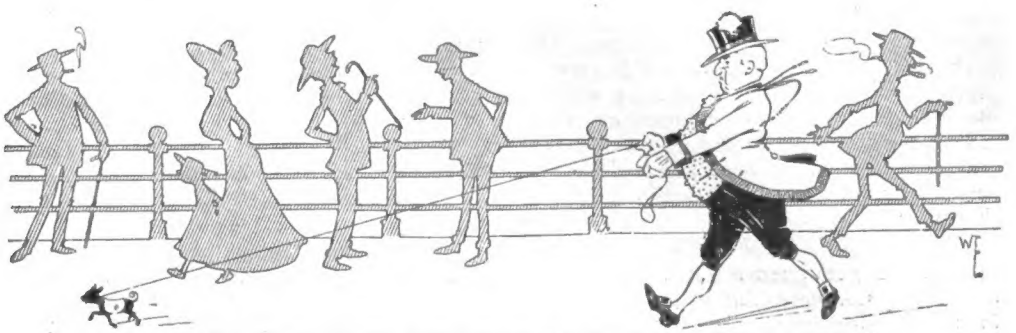

Mrs. Plutus: "John, I want you to take Fido for a walk on the parade."
John: "If you please, mum, Fido won't follow me."
Mrs. Plutus: "Well, then, you must follow Fido"

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MR. EDITOR —HIS PAGE.

Photograph Competition Result, and a Little Desultory Conversation.

PHOTOGRAPH COMPETITION: RESULT.

I HAVE received an immense number of attempts in this competition, some of them good, some indifferent, some bad—and all interesting to one, like myself, interested in photography. They came to me from all parts of Europe, and from folk of many different nationalities. Indeed, I was astonished at the widespread interest taken in this competition—which appeals, after all, only to that comparatively small section of the public taken with the glamour of the camera.

To come to details. The chief difficulty which the competitors seem to have had to contend with is the difficulty of making their pictures natural. Children—unless they have something to do with the stage—are always hard to pose. They are either impossibly fidgety or impossibly self-conscious. Some of the attempts show the models in the stiffest of stiff positions—kissing each other, not as if they liked it, but as though what ought to be a pleasure were a heavy duty to be got over as soon as possible. Again, I notice that many of the children, though their lips meet, are glancing curiously at the camera, or some onlooker, out of the corners of their eyes—plainly proving, therefore, that they have not their heart in the business—of kissing.

The prize-winner is a lady: Miss Mabel Walton, of Likoma, Roundhay, Leeds, to whom I have forwarded five guineas. Her perfectly charming photograph I hope to reproduce in THE ROYAL together with the attempts of several other competitors, whose efforts seem to me worthy of reproduction, and to whom I shall have much pleasure in forwarding the sum of half-a-guinea consolation prize.

PICTURE PARS.

Stories I get, poems I get, and both in astonishing numbers (I'm far from complaining: the more the merrier, say I!), but you don't send me anything like as many contributions for my "Picture Paragraph" pages as I should like to have. Now let all photographers who have gone in for the above competition gird their loins, and look around for curiosities suitable for these pages. It's really no such great mystery. If you haven't any curiosities to photograph in your neighbourhood, you can always think out photographic curiosities—tricks and illusions with the camera, which you and I know well enough is not quite so truthful an object as is popularly imagined.

I'm no skinflint. I'll pay you well for any photograph I think suitable for my pages. So go ahead!

CHARLES REID, OF WISHAW.

Surrounded by the murky atmosphere of Wishaw, N.B., where the air is laden with smoke from the tall chimney-stacks of a score of coal mines, Mr. Charles Reid yet manages to obtain the beautiful photographs of birds with which the article (page 499) he contributes to this number of THE ROYAL is illustrated.

But within about two miles of Mr. Reid's studio runs the river Clyde, and near its banks are woods, the home of many of the birds which have posed in front of his camera. Mr. Reid has made a life-long study of birds and animals, and he is a walking mine of information regarding their habits and pretty ways.

His patience is one of the most marvellous things I've ever known, and he appears to possess an inexhaustible stock of it. He took his first animal photograph in 1864, and has been photographing birds and animals ever since.

Mr. Reid has travelled all over the United Kingdom in search of subjects, but not the least delightful of his charming animal studies have been made in the Highlands of his beloved Scotland, and in the Shetland Islands. Many and many a mile has he walked and scrambled, laden with weighty photographic apparatus, in search of his quarry, but the results more than repay, in his eyes, the trouble they have involved.

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